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An Introductory  
Study of Ethics





# An Introductory Study of Ethics

BY  
WARNER FITE

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## PREFACE

THE study of conduct which is here offered to students and teachers of philosophy was begun with the intention of furnishing simply a plain statement of the existing ethical situation, — by which I mean an analysis of the moral problem and a definition of the several types of ethical theory. But it was found impossible to make a plain statement without adopting a point of view for the definition of the problem and the theories in question. And in the search for a satisfactory point of view I have been led to a more or less independent reconstruction of the situation as a whole. In a study like ethics, where nothing can be uttered which has not been in a measure foreshadowed, it is difficult to know how far one has succeeded in really contributing to the discussion ; yet I hope that the following pages may be found not only useful to students beginning the study but of interest to those already familiar with its problems.

I hope also that they may appeal to some who are not, in the stricter sense, students of philosophy. Without ignoring the necessities of scientific treatment I have endeavoured to avoid some of its narrower limitations and to meet the point of view of the educated man. There is a large public of thoughtful persons whose attitude toward philosophical study is one of serious interest yet at the same time somewhat

sceptical, and to whom probably every student of philosophy has felt the need of justifying the claims of his subject. I believe that an introductory study for college purposes ought to be such as to meet this need, and that, on the other hand, a philosophical study addressed to college students would do well to presuppose in them the same breadth of interest and maturity of thought as is to be found in the educated man as such. This presupposition may frequently run counter to the facts, but even then it will offer probably the best method of securing a thoughtful interest in the subject.

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## INTRODUCTION



# AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY OF ETHICS

## CHAPTER I

### THE SCOPE AND METHOD OF ETHICS

#### 1. DEFINITION OF ETHICS

ETHICS is commonly described as the study of moral conduct. By moral conduct we mean of course to include immoral conduct, since ethics in dealing with the one necessarily includes the other. The term 'moral' as here used covers all conduct which is subject to the judgment of right and wrong. The distinction implied is not between moral and immoral, right and wrong, but between moral and *unmoral*, *i.e.* between conduct which has a moral aspect and that which has none. For example, whether I shall in a given case speak truly or falsely is a distinctly moral question, but whether I shall write this page with a pen, a pencil, or a typewriter appears to have no moral significance whatever.

The question arises, then, What is it that gives conduct a moral significance? Theoretically this question may lead in various directions. It may require us to distinguish the moral from the economic, the psychological, the physiological, the physical, or from any other aspect of human conduct. But the practically important question in the definition of ethics is the distinction of the moral from the useful. This question has been, in the history of ethics, a subject of long-continued discussion. At first sight it seems that between the moral and the merely useful there is a wide and impassable gulf. It seems one thing to say that an act is advisable, or profitable, or useful,

or expedient, and quite another to declare it to be a positive duty. There appears to be a wide distinction between "It is best for me to do it" and "I ought to do it," and it would seem that, in the case of the merely useful act, I might refuse to perform it provided I were willing to accept the consequences, whereas the moral act is one that I am bound to perform whether I accept them or not. Accordingly, it has been widely held that the sentiment of duty—the feeling of 'ought,' as it is sometimes described—is wholly unique and irreducible to a consideration of utilities; and by some moralists it has been maintained that the feeling is ultimately unanalysable.<sup>1</sup>

The opposite view, which is the view to be presented here, and probably the more common view of to-day, treats the distinction between the moral and the useful as ultimately a distinction of degree only. An act is moral, as distinct from merely useful, to the extent that its consequences are conceived to be far-reaching and important. Any act may become a subject for moral judgment. An apparently most insignificant act, such as tying my shoe, may at times be a decisive factor in the attainment of moral purposes; if the knot is not tied fast, it may come loose and impede my efforts at a moment when all my energies are engaged in a struggle of life and death. And though acts of this kind have rarely such tragic importance, yet it is clear that every minute detail of my action contributes, through the manner of its performance, its share toward the furtherance or hindrance of my life-purpose, and hence toward success or failure in the attainment of moral ends. When, therefore, we distinguish certain acts as being useful rather than right, it means only that we abstract from their ultimate consequences and attend to those that are more immediate. And this, again, means only that we fail to consider their moral character,—not that they are intrinsically unmoral.

<sup>1</sup> See Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book I, ch. iii; Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Introduction.



When, on the other hand, we speak of certain acts as distinctly moral, it means that we have their ultimate consequences clearly in mind. With regard to most of our particular acts these ultimate consequences are rarely considered, for a large part of our life is already securely organised upon moral grounds. From a moral standpoint it is highly important to obtain sufficient food and sleep, to avoid the dangers of fire and water and of poison, but there is little temptation to do otherwise. Consequently, we rarely think of asking, Why should I eat? or, Why should I be on my guard against fire and other dangers? If we do ask the question, it is, as a rule, readily answered by reference to some proximate end whose value is relatively unquestioned. For example, if a man asks me, Why should I eat? or, as the question is more likely to be, Why should I eat this and abstain from that? it is sufficient to point out the effect of his action upon his health. The value of health is commonly accepted as unquestionable. Hence, the question of what to eat is commonly regarded as a question of mere utility. It is only when the proximate end of such acts is itself under discussion that the question becomes a moral one. For example, if a man goes to the length of asking why he should care for his health, it will be necessary, in giving him an answer, to explain the connection between physical health and all the more important objects of his life. When this connection is made out, it becomes clear that the choice between two articles of food, so far as this choice is related to health, is one involving far-reaching and important consequences. The choice is then taken out of the region of the merely useful into that of the distinctly moral.

The difficulty which men have in connecting the moral and the useful is due largely to the narrow range of consequences commonly implied in the latter. To call an act profitable means usually that it will put money in one's pockets. To say that it is advisable, or that it is best, is merely a more delicate expression of the same idea. The expediency, *e.g.*, of hold-

ing certain views or of making certain acquaintances, commonly suggests meanness and insincerity. And even the term 'useful,' though more abstract and morally colourless, is very commonly limited to a usefulness for purely material ends. Limiting these terms to such narrow ends, one is justified in making a sharp distinction between the useful and the moral. Certainly the duty of filling my own pocket, though imperative enough at times, is on the whole less generally imperative than that of telling the truth ; and I may very easily think of the one as less binding than the other. But when we take into consideration the broader ends of specifically moral action, the case is different. When we remember that we have not only to supply our own needs but those of others, and not our material needs only but all the needs, intellectual, artistic, spiritual, as well as material, which arise out of our human nature taken as a whole, we feel that the usefulness of our acts toward these larger ends acquires a certain dignity and imperativeness which is not evident when we think of them as useful in a purely selfish and material sense. It then becomes clear that, through a more comprehensive interpretation of the ends aimed at, our conception of the useful has gradually developed into that of the truly moral.

I prefer, then, in defining the scope of ethics, to say simply that it is a study of practical life in its more general aspects. As a study of practical life it is to be distinguished from studies of fact and theory, such as physics, physiology, or psychology, which — immediately at least — aim only at the attainment of truth in itself and have no interest in its practical application. And as a 'more general' study of practical life it is to be distinguished from the technical sciences such as medicine and applied mechanics, which deal with special departments of practical activity, and with the principles whose application is confined to special departments, rather than with the principle of practical activity in general. Thus the distinction between ethics and the technical studies is a question of degree of gen-

erality ; it is another aspect of the distinction between the right and the useful. Both ethics and the technical sciences have to do with right ways of doing things. A method of curing a disease or of building a bridge cannot be technically right if it is morally wrong, and it cannot be morally right if it is technically impossible or wasteful. But no one person can give adequate consideration both to the general principles of conduct and to all its special conditions. Hence, we have a distinction of problem and aspect, ethics emphasising the more general aspects of conduct, the technical sciences emphasising the special aspects of their respective departments.

As a result of its more general character ethics is more interested in the ends of conduct than in the means for attaining these ends, while, owing to their special character, the technical studies are more interested in ways and means. For this reason ethics is often defined as a 'normative' study—a study of norms or ends—in distinction from the 'practical,' or technical, studies. But it is to be noted that ethics is only predominantly a normative study, not exclusively so ; and the technical studies are only predominantly 'practical.' For ends and means cannot be studied in complete isolation from each other. The end to be attained determines the means to be used and is determined in turn by the nature of the available means. It would therefore be misleading to say that the moralist thinks only of ends or ideals ; for the ideal which he recommends presupposes certain technical possibilities, the consideration of which carries him into the fields of the special sciences. Moral conduct must be, in the first place, mechanically and physiologically possible, since nothing can be accounted a duty for which our strength is insufficient. In the second place it must be economically possible ; for moral ideals are at the same time social ideals, and ideals which the economic conditions render impossible can hardly constitute a moral obligation. And further, it must be psychologically possible ; it must be the kind of conduct for which there could be a con-

ceivable motive ; for we cannot urge as a duty that in which no one could conceivably be interested. With regard to the physical, physiological, and economic possibilities of conduct, the moralist usually accepts the results attained in the special sciences, though not without reserving the right of criticism and revision. The psychological conditions he investigates himself ; and, indeed, it would not be too much to say that the whole task of ethics is to determine what conduct is psychologically possible ; at any rate it is clear that the discussion of ideals or ends is conducted at every step with reference to the actual possibilities of desire and motive. If, moreover, we glance for a moment at the technical sciences, it is evident that they on their side do not overlook the question of ends ; for the physician is not so much interested in the effect of drugs in general as in their curative effects, and the engineer is less interested in mechanical possibilities as such than in their application to human uses. We may say, then, that, as compared with other practical sciences, ethics is more distinctly normative and gives greater attention to the question of ends ; but it does not confine its attention to ends alone, nor are the technical studies interested exclusively in ways and means.

## 2. THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF ETHICS

As a study of practical life, ethics is the outcome of a practical problem. This statement is sometimes contradicted. Certain moralists, among them Mr. Leslie Stephen,<sup>1</sup> deny that the ethical problem has any practical importance. It is held that we find a substantial unanimity with regard to most of the concrete details of moral conduct, and that the differences relate only to minor occasional points. The problem of ethics is not to tell us what is right but to give us the reason for what we already know to be right.<sup>2</sup> Our interest in the study is con-

<sup>1</sup> *The Science of Ethics*, ch. i, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> As a rule men agree on the question as to *what* is moral ; opinions are divided only as to *why* it is so. — WUNDT.

sequently theoretical rather than practical. It seems, however, that this practical unanimity is largely illusory. Are we really agreed as to *what* is right? Granting that we are all agreed upon the duty of being fair and honest, of keeping promises, of helping our neighbour in distress, and the like, can we state what constitutes honesty, justice, benevolence, etc.? The view under consideration assumes that honesty is already defined and can be incorporated into a simple and clear rule of conduct; but a slight reflection will convince us that it has nearly as many meanings as there are men who speak of it. For example, I wish to sell a piece of land which I fear will fall in value; is it honest to offer it for sale without giving my reasons for wishing to be rid of it? Or have I fulfilled the requirements of honesty when I have refrained from giving false information about it? It would be impossible to state all the various solutions which would be offered for a problem of this kind; they would differ as widely as the characters of those who offered them. I should say, then, that so far as men are in clear agreement with regard to the details of conduct, it is in cases where the issues are not obviously important, — where, in other words, the morality of the act is not clearly brought into question. Consider, however, the following: we say that a man ought to pay his just debts; but suppose that the payment of a certain debt means that his family will inevitably perish from starvation; can we say that the obligation is still clear, or that the verdict would be unanimous? Or, again, it is accepted that a man ought to be allowed to determine the disposition of his own efforts, — in other words, to retain his property; yet ought he to be allowed to do so if the right is exercised to the general disadvantage of the community? On all questions where the issues are clearly important and where the problem is clearly a moral one, we find not unanimity and clearness but divergence and confusion, and it is this confusion which constitutes the problem for ethics. On this account we may say that the ethical problem is not only practically important but of the highest practical importance.

Ethics is productive of practical results. This statement also requires emphasis, because it is sometimes held (usually by those who deny the existence of a practical problem) that after a course of study in ethics a man's conduct is just what it was before. Now among the practical results which ethics has to offer I do not include a code of rules, by a mere reference to which a man may solve all the problems of life. Such a code would be desirable if it could be constructed, but it happens that our life is far too complex to be dealt with so simply. Granting, however, that results of this definite kind are impossible, ethics may still furnish us with some general guidance as to the direction which our life ought to take. And granting further that positive results in ethics are largely complicated by divergences of theory, still it is true that in the analysis and discussion of conflicting theories we obtain a clearer idea of the nature of the problem and of the direction in which we must look for a solution. The moral standpoint which a man adopts as his own is largely, no doubt, the expression of his individual character and tendency; but, whatever it be, it will represent a larger view of the moral problem, and hence a more adequate response to moral demands, after the systematic study of conduct than before.

It is useless, however, to discuss the value of that which we can hardly help doing. This is the case in ethics. We do not create the moral problem; it is thrust upon us. And we do not deliberately choose to discuss it, but take it up spontaneously and inevitably before we are even aware that it is the moral problem we are discussing. We rarely discuss any subject into which it does not enter. Most of our conversation deals, more or less directly, with the actions of our fellows, either of those in public life or of our more immediate associates; and in talking about them we inevitably, and often unconsciously, make an interpretation of their motives and pass judgment upon their moral character. In so doing we are at the same time giving an unconscious expression to our own



theory of morality ; and any one who is familiar with ethical doctrines may easily trace, in the conversation of a group of persons, all the theoretical tendencies represented by the several schools of ethics. Now it is certainly better, if we are to discuss conduct at all, that we should, as far as possible, deal with it systematically and coherently. And in this respect, if in no other, ethics has a distinctly practical value: for it reduces the common and vague expression of moral opinion to a state of relative order and consistency.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. THE OBJECTIVE CHARACTER OF ETHICS

The study of ethics presupposes an objective standard. I say 'presupposes,' because it must be admitted that the standard by which we measure conduct is a relatively undefined presupposition of our thought rather than a principle which is clearly stated and universally recognised, like a standard of weights and measures. For this reason some persons refuse to recognise its existence. One man, says the sceptic, prefers to hoard his wealth, another to devote it to the welfare of society ; each has his own point of view and each believes himself to be right. Any one who should venture to decide between them would simply be introducing a third point of view peculiar to himself. Who, then, is to say that one is right and another wrong? Well, perhaps we may not be able to say offhand who is right, but it is clear that, if we discuss the subject at all, we presuppose some standard of right and wrong which is not dependent upon individual preference or opinion, and which is therefore objective. The very fact that men are interested in ethical problems, that they pass judgments of approval and condemnation, and attempt to convince their neighbours of the rightness of their own actions, shows that they have in mind an

<sup>1</sup> On the practical value of moral theory, see Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 6 ff.; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book IV, ch. ii.; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, § 11; Dewey, "On Moral Theory and Moral Practice," *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. I, No. 2.

objective moral standard. If my standard of right were exclusively mine, and yours were exclusively yours, we could not even talk about right conduct, since the word 'right' as used by one of us would correspond to no idea in the mind of the other. When we discuss questions of right and wrong, we assume that the word has a common meaning, in other words, an objective meaning.

The objective standard of right is the standard which common sense tends to adopt. It is the standard indicated by the tendencies observable in the progress of human thought. This does not mean that it is the standard more commonly accepted, for the truer principle and the higher form of morality appear rather in the standards of the more reflective minority than in those of the relatively unthinking majority. Nevertheless, in saying that it is the standard which common sense tends to adopt, I mean that it is the standard which all men come to recognise in proportion as they acquire greater breadth of culture and experience. A man may assert a truth against the protest of the whole community and generation in which he lives ; but his assertion would be meaningless if he could not believe that his position would in course of time be universally approved.

In referring the standard of conduct to the verdict of common sense I do not mean that it is determined by the observation of facts as distinct from theoretical reasoning ; nor again, that it is determined by reasoning and not by observation. I wish rather to avoid any implication with regard to the exact manner in which the development of thought is determined. It is clear that both of these factors must in some sense be implied in it ; for we refuse to accept a theory which is unsupported by fact, however consistent it appear from the standpoint of theory ; and similarly we refuse to accept any statement of facts which appears to be fundamentally irrational. But whatever be the principle underlying our thought, it has clearly a tendency to develop in one direction rather than in another.



For example, we may say that all educated men believe, in some sense, in the law of gravitation, and that every man tends to believe in it in proportion as his intelligence is developed. When I refer the rightness of conduct to the verdict of common sense, I assume that similarly specific tendencies exist, and may to an extent be distinguished and defined, in our sense of moral value.

#### 4. IS ETHICS A SCIENCE OR A BRANCH OF PHILOSOPHY?

Is ethics a science or a branch of philosophy? This question has more than a theoretical value for us, because our answer to it has much to say in determining our method of study. First, however, what is the distinction between philosophy and science?

Philosophy, as I understand it, is an attempt to comprehend the world as a whole; the sciences confine themselves each to a special department. We need not go far back in the history of thought to reach the point where the two were indistinguishable, and where the term 'philosophy' covered all systematic knowledge. Thus Descartes' work covered the special fields of physics, mathematics, and biology, besides that of metaphysics, or philosophy in the narrower sense. Leibnitz shares with Newton the honour of having formulated the differential calculus. And Kant, who also distinguished philosophy from science, made important contributions to physics and astronomy. It is not many years since works on physics appeared under the title of 'natural philosophy'; and within our own time we have had 'mental philosophy' for psychology, and 'moral philosophy' for ethics. But the advancement of learning and the consequent accumulation of problems rendered the profession of philosopher in this comprehensive sense no longer a possibility. Practical necessity required a division of labour and a specialisation of problem. The result is that certain aspects of the world, or certain classes of things in the world, according to convenience of treatment or investi-

gation, have become gradually abstracted from the whole and have been made the special objects of research for particular classes of students. In these special departments we have what is known as the sciences as distinct from philosophy or metaphysics. They differ in the extent of their independence of philosophy. None of them can be completely presented without reference to more general philosophical principles. Physics is, perhaps, the best example of an independent science, yet even the physicist may be obliged to turn metaphysician — when, for example, he begins to discuss the ultimate nature of matter and force. The distinction between philosophy and the sciences is, accordingly, one of degree; it is a question of greater or less comprehensiveness of subject-matter.

The independence of a special science is a question of the extent to which it is in the possession of an established working hypothesis. This hypothesis serves as a basis for the definition and determination of the facts. It assumes that certain questions with regard to the facts are for the moment settled, and thus it relieves the scientist of the duty of considering, in his particular investigations, the more general questions upon which the validity of his results is ultimately dependent. It is like the chronometer which the mariner causes to be regulated while in port, and whose readings he accepts without criticism while at sea. Physics possesses such an hypothesis in the form, let us say, of the law of conservation of energy. Not that the law represents a final and absolute truth. It is still open to modification and criticism, and in fact such a process is constantly going on. But it represents a view of things which is sufficiently well established in the minds of philosophers and physicists alike, to enable the latter to make use of it without constantly questioning its ultimate validity. The physicist may therefore proceed in the determination of facts and truth with the confident expectation that his results will be generally understood and accepted.

Now it seems to me that ethics is very far from realising the conditions of independence. I will not say that it has no established principles whatever ; for example, I believe we may regard it as now an established principle that the rightness of conduct is determined by its conduciveness to an end, — a principle which, fifty years ago, was the chief subject of ethical discussion. But the principles which may be regarded as established carry us but a short distance in the determination of ethical truth ; so that it is very difficult for the moralist to make a statement which does not assume one side or the other of a disputed question. For example, in a recent work on ethics,<sup>1</sup> I find the following : “ Hedonists say that man’s only interest is in getting pleasure. But this is an exploded error. A young man’s idea of *enjoying* the office of governor, or of enjoying the position of a prominent attorney, is, no doubt, very interesting. But the thought of *being* governor, or of being a prominent attorney, in itself and aside from any thought of the pleasure to be derived from the position when attained, is at least equally interesting and incitive of action toward its attainment.” What is here stated as a psychological fact presupposes the rejection, by the author, of the principles of one school of ethics and psychology (the hedonistic and associational school) and the acceptance of those of its opponents. A hedonist would not only not accept it as a fact, but he would not even be able to conceive of it as such. He would ask, “ Except as being governor were suggestive of pleasure, how could you possibly desire it ? ” And the question would appear to him unanswerable. Thus we see how the statement of ethical facts is rendered uncertain by a lack of agreement with regard to standpoint and principle.

But when we attempt to define our ethical standpoint, we find our task to be impossible without venturing within—and far within—the field of metaphysics. Nothing shows this better than the recent history of ethics, which has been marked

<sup>1</sup> Mezes, *Ethics, Descriptive and Explanatory*, p. 66.

chiefly by an attempt to break away from the traditions of the hedonistic school. When the critic of hedonism tells me that pleasure is not the sole moral motive, perhaps not a motive at all, I am impelled to ask him what the other motives are, so that I may recognise them when I see them. To say that it is not pleasure but happiness, or not happiness but blessedness, conveys very little definite meaning. To tell me that it is the desire to develop the capacities of my nature and to realise myself is hardly more definite, for I do not know why the capacities of my nature may not turn out to be merely capacities for pleasure. To tell me that it is the motive of reason as opposed to appetite leaves me still helpless, since I cannot regard the satisfaction of appetite as fundamentally irrational. Nor am I the clearer for being told that the moral motive is altruistic. To be sure I know that altruism commands me to consider the interests of others rather than my own; but what are the interests of others? Are the demands of honour egoistic or altruistic? And where would you place those of sex? And why are the egoistic motives necessarily motives of pleasure? In a word, much of our recent ethics has been involved in a perpetual circle of 'self,' 'reason,' 'happiness,' 'pleasure,' 'egoistic,' and 'social,' as a result of which each term comes finally to mean nothing in particular.<sup>1</sup>

The source of the difficulty lies, as I believe, in the attempt to define a man's moral attitude apart from his attitude toward things in general. For the moral attitude is not the expression of a particular belief with regard to a particular subject; on the contrary, it is a general expression in practical activity of one's view of the world as a whole. The moral attitude expresses itself, therefore, not only in the specifically 'moral' situations,—where a man is called upon to decide between self-interest and social welfare or between present

<sup>1</sup> For example, as a result of Mr. Taylor's attempt to deal with ethics on a purely empirical basis, I find it difficult to attach any clear meaning to 'self-culture' and 'social justice' (see *The Problem of Conduct*).

indulgence and future good, — but in every action and belief of the man, — in his daily habits, his clothes, his house, his books and recreations, his scientific theories, his political and social views. In short, its complete expression is to be found only in his general system of philosophy. If we confine our study of his attitude to any one of the special forms of expression, we shall never understand its meaning, and we shall never be able to distinguish in any satisfactory way the attitude of one man or of one school from that of another. No doubt the difference of attitude is present in each particular form of expression. Even within the specifically moral field there is certainly a difference between, say, aiming at happiness and realising one's self. But what the distinction may be is clear only to one who is acquainted with the attitude toward the world as a whole which these specifically moral distinctions imply.

Whether ethics is to be treated as a science or as a branch of philosophy, is therefore the practical question of clearness ; it is the question as to whether we can attain any adequate understanding of ethical principles without reference to their philosophical background. Believing as I do that a purely scientific treatment of ethics is unsatisfactory, I shall endeavour later to follow the ethical distinctions to their sources in differences of philosophical theory. Since, however, our interest is primarily in ethics and only secondarily in philosophy, we shall not go further into philosophical theory than our immediate purpose demands.

##### 5. ETHICS AND COGNATE STUDIES

Something should now be said regarding the relation of ethics to other sciences. Its nearest neighbour is psychology. In fact it is not too much to say that ethics is a department of psychology. For it is simply a development of the practical consequences of the psychology of desire and will. The problem of conduct is almost wholly a question of the factors involved in the determination of desire ; the special applica-

tion to conduct is a relatively obvious corollary. The relation of psychology to ethics is thus parallel to its relation to logic. Ethics works out the practical aspect of the psychology of will, while logic performs a similar service for the psychology of thought. Both studies are occupied chiefly with a discussion of psychological principles, and in both the practical application, though constituting the main feature of the end, is the smallest part of the task.

Ethics has a close relation to economics. I am not sure that this relation would be generally admitted by economists, for economists, as a rule, are very emphatic in declaring that they are interested only in the formulation of scientific laws, not in their ethical and social implications. But this limitation does not create so great a difference between the sciences as at first sight it would seem ; for, as we have just noted, ethics is also very largely occupied in the formulation of scientific laws, *i.e.* psychological laws ; and it is well-nigh impossible to state a scientific law, or a scientific fact, without implying, at least, the desirability of some particular form of action. For example, if the economist shows that the trust is a necessary feature of our industrial life, he offers, in spite of himself, an argument against its summary abolition. It seems to me, then, that the difference between actually stating our practical conclusions and allowing them to be conveyed by implication is not a very important one. And when we look further at the two sciences of ethics and economics, we find that both are dealing with the problem of value ; and for both the basis of value is the same, since, as economists themselves admit, all value is determined ultimately by human needs and desires. The difference between them appears, then, to be this : the economist tends to confine his discussion of values to market values, that is to say, to those values which have been more clearly worked out, and which thus constitute a basis of exchange, while the moralist extends his discussion to the question of value in general. Thus the moralist discusses the value



of honesty and justice, as well as that of material goods and services, while the economist confines his attention mainly to the latter.

Ethics is also closely related to sociology. The problem of the two studies is practically identical; for every question of conduct is a question also of social relations. But the two differ somewhat in method, — or at least in their predominant form of method. The moralist as such confines himself very largely to the discussion of theory, and for the facts to which his theory is related he either relies upon his private observation or accepts the results of systematic researches made by others. The sociologist, on the other hand, gives much of his attention to systematic investigations of his own. The sociologist as such studies the conditions peculiar to the several classes of his own society; as an anthropologist, he studies the life of primitive races.

**Ethical Literature.** Introductory studies: Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*; Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*; Thilly, *Introduction to Ethics*.

More general: Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*; Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus* (too compact for general reading, but important for the appreciation of present points of view); Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (the classical exposition of modern English idealism, metaphysical in treatment); Höffding, *Ethik*; Ladd, *The Philosophy of Conduct* (recent); Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory* (valuable chiefly for its analysis and criticism); Mezes, *Ethics, Descriptive and Explanatory* (recent); Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, tr. Thilly (a good introduction to the subject); Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics* (a careful and judicious estimate of common-sense morality); Simmel, *Einleitung in die Moralphilosophie*; Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*, more particularly Part I, *Data of Ethics*, published separately (the classical evolutionary treatise); Stephen, *The Science of Ethics* (evolutionary); Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct* (recent); Wundt, *Ethics*, tr. Titchener, Gulliver, and Washburn (very complete).

On the history of ethics: Jodl, *Geschichte der Ethik*; Sidgwick, *History of Ethics*; Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in Eng-*

*land*; Albee, *A History of English Utilitarianism*; Wundt, Vol. II; Martineau (an analysis of important types rather than a history).

On the history of morals (moral practice): Lecky, *History of European Morals*; Paulsen, Book I.

On the scope and method of ethics, see Paulsen, Introduction; Mackenzie, Introduction; Wundt, Introduction; Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. i; Seth, Introduction, chs. i and ii; Muirhead, Book I.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ETHICAL PROBLEM

HAVING now made an external survey of the boundaries of our subject, we are ready for an introduction to the subject-matter itself. The present chapter will be a preliminary analysis of the ethical problem, together with a preliminary statement of the divergence of attitude and theory with regard to its solution. I shall first point out some of the more important forms in which the problem appears in actual life. For many persons this may be unnecessary ; but, as we have noted, there is evidently some doubt, even in the minds of moralists, as to how far the problem is one of real and practical urgency, and there is probably a larger confusion as to just where it is to be located. It will therefore be worth while to give a few pages to mere illustration.

#### 1. PROBLEMS OF PROFESSION AND OCCUPATION

For most men the more important moral questions are those which arise in connection with profession and occupation. (*a*) For the professional man the most difficult question is that of intellectual integrity. Whether he be a clergyman or college professor — or, for that matter, he may be a physician, lawyer, painter, composer, or architect — he is always in some sense an investigator and teacher. Theoretically he is an expert in his particular department of thought and appreciation, and his business is to seek out the truth in this department for the enlightenment of others. Now, though he is thus qualified as an expert, he has to deal with a public, or with private clients, who are often unfitted to judge of the value of

his results, and who yet reserve the right (and with a measure of justice) to pass upon them. And the possibility of continuing his occupation depends more or less upon their approval. Ought he then to give them what they regard as acceptable, or to stand by his own presumably more enlightened view? Let us take a concrete case. A clergyman finds himself, after some years of service, disposed to question the doctrines of his church organisation. Ought he then openly to avow his doubts, or simply to avoid raising the question? Honour demands of course that he be frank. But there are other considerations. In the first place, he may be an exceedingly useful man in his parish community. All his capacities for usefulness may point to this particular field, and any step involving his retirement will mean just so much loss to his community. In the second place, he is probably the father of a family, and may find it difficult, if not impossible, to earn his living in any other field. This may seem a minor consideration when compared with that of honour, but surely it is valid. Certainly there seems to be a limit to which fineness and completeness of satisfaction for one's sense of honour may be purchased at the expense of hardship for one's family. And, for that matter, is there not a limit to which one may justifiably purchase such satisfaction at the cost of physical degradation for self? This conflict of considerations is what constitutes the moral problem: how far ought one to yield to the social and material conditions constituting one's environment, how far ought they to be resisted? The same question presents itself, with a difference of form, in each of the professions. The philosopher who is strictly impartial in his analysis of religious beliefs, the economist who is thoroughgoing in his analysis of social conditions, finds himself branded by the ultra-conservative as an infidel or a dangerous agitator, and threatened with a loss of his academic position. He finds, too, that he endangers the welfare of the institution which he represents. The artist who is true to his conceptions of beauty

finds the public often unprepared to appreciate his work, and therefore unwilling to accord him recognition. For the physician the strictly scientific practice of medicine leads often in one direction, the conditions of remuneration in another; and the lawyer is called upon by his clients, not to interpret the law in order that they may act within it, but to assist them in evading it. In all the professions there is a certain felt divergence between the demands of professional honour and intellectual integrity, and the conditions of professional work, and a man who should give unyielding and absolute devotion to honour would not be able to maintain his position.

(*b*) For the business man it becomes a question of commercial integrity. Considerations of strict honour demand of him that he offer his customers nothing but genuine goods, and, for that matter, since the business man is also an expert in his particular line, that he assist them in obtaining those goods which would best serve their purposes. Honour also demands that he pay his clerks and operatives a fair return for their services. But he finds frequently that certain adulterations and imitations are countenanced by the trade generally, including even the most reputable houses. He learns also that it pays better to consult the whims of the public, to stimulate by skilful advertising the demand for a constant change of style, than to minister to their more intrinsic needs; in fact, it is now accepted in trade circles that any article not too obviously worthless may be given a wide sale, and that a wholly artificial need for it may be created, by a sufficient amount of clever advertisement. He learns, further, that if he pays his operatives a fair wage he will be undersold by others who force wages down to their lowest limit. At any rate this is the excuse commonly offered. It appears, then, that if he yield strict obedience to the demands of honour, he will inevitably be forced into bankruptcy. In the meantime not only must he earn a living for himself and his family, which is a valid enough consideration, but he has also a certain duty to the

public. For commerce and industry is a matter not only of private gain but of public service, and the work of the merchant and manufacturer is a necessary social function. A business man of honest intentions might therefore very reasonably ask himself whether, apart from the question of a living, he might not better accept those conditions of trade which he is unable to alter, and serve the public to the best of his ability, than lead a life of entire uselessness. However this may be, it seems that we find in business the same situation that we find in the professions, — a certain divergence between the demands of honour and the conditions of maintaining one's position.

(c) Among the problems of profession and occupation is the difficult problem of official duty, — that is, of the duty of an agent to his principal and to the public. Let us imagine the situation of the president of a railway. Probably most persons will admit that, in our own country at least, the practice is very common of obtaining rights of way, and other privileges which railways must have if they are properly to serve the public (leaving dividends aside), through corrupt legislation. And frequently one must offer a bribe for the performance of ordinary official duties. But bribery is properly regarded as one of the most vicious of all crimes. What then ought the president of a railway to do? Honour demands of course that he forbid all corruption on the part of his corporation, and that he resign his post if an honourable administration of it be impossible. And if it were a matter of private business there would probably be little doubt as to the proper course. But railways are an important part of public service. If they are to be operated, they must have presidents, and must earn their expenses, if not pay dividends; and if they are to run under present conditions of widespread corruption their officials must meet the conditions. Can we say then that, in view of the conditions, a railway president would not be justified in resorting to bribery? The situation is not different, though perhaps it is less acute, when the official in question is president of a

university. In order that university work may be carried on it must have funds, which must be obtained by contribution from the wealthy or by appropriation from the state legislature. Very often there are religious and social prejudices to be satisfied, or sons for whom special favours are sought. Now we must admit that the institutions of higher learning are of immense benefit to the community. Can we say then that, in view of this benefit, the president of such an institution would be justified in making a false profession of personal opinion, or in restricting the freedom of speech in his institution, or in granting a degree to an unworthy student, in return for a sufficiently large contribution? At any rate are there not many persons, alumni and others, who, while condemning him for making such concessions with a view to his private interest, would equally condemn him for refusing to make them in the interest of his university? This situation is not peculiar to those who occupy high official position. It is common to all employees, — to all who serve the interests of others. As a moral agent I am bound to be scrupulously honest in my dealings with every one. But in view of the conditions of securing employment, can I be as scrupulous when acting for another as when acting for myself? And would such an impartial attitude be really justifiable?

## 2. THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

One of the most important moral problems of to-day, and perhaps of all times, is the so-called 'social problem.' The social problem is the outcome of the demand for personal liberty. This demand is embodied in the so-called 'natural rights': the right of liberty and equality, which, roughly speaking, gives to each individual an equal voice in the selection of governors and in the determination of public policy; the right of property, which leaves to every one the disposition of his property; the right of life, which holds the life of every human being to be sacred and inviolable. Now it is clearly immoral to convert any person into a slave. And there is only a differ-

ence of degree between slavery and disenfranchisement, for where the franchise rights are unequal those persons with the larger rights are to an extent the masters of the others. It is also immoral to take away a man's property; indeed, it is just this that is meant by the common word 'theft.' And except for self-preservation, or perhaps as a punishment for murder, it is unquestionably immoral to take human life. Evidently, then, the demand for natural rights has a solid basis in morality. But now we discover that the full recognition of such rights is attended with certain difficulties. Under equal franchise rights it becomes possible for unscrupulous political leaders to gain control, by bribery or sophistry, of the large mass of ignorant votes, and to use the power thus acquired in furthering their own interests, to the great disadvantage of the whole community. On the basis of property rights the more economical and industrious (not to speak of those who are favoured by accident or corrupt legislation) gradually accumulate a mass of wealth, until at last they become a power often dangerous to the public welfare. And on the basis of the right of life those afflicted with idiocy and other hereditary disease are allowed to live, usually as a charge upon the community, and frequently, through procreation, to disseminate the disease among future generations. In this conflict of considerations we have the social problem. It would seem that no man or body of men is justified in assuming the direction of the conduct of others, much less in depriving them of property justly acquired; yet have these considerations any weight when they are opposed to social welfare?

### 3. PERSONAL PROBLEMS

We come now to some more distinctly personal problems. (*a*) Probably the most difficult is that of maintaining an absolute sincerity in our relations with others. Nothing is more repugnant to an honest man than the thought of winning the favour of others by flattery and dissimulation, and nothing



more contemptible than the practice of choosing one's friends for the use that can be made of them. Yet is there any man who is able altogether to escape the necessity of doing so? We live in a world in which the balance of power is often held by those who are narrow and prejudiced, not to say selfish and unscrupulous, and if we would have the opportunity for useful activity, perhaps if we would live at all, we must come to terms with them; and often we can make no terms except by disregarding our sympathies and convictions, and even suppressing our views of right and wrong. In view of these conditions does not a certain measure of insincerity become a moral necessity? And for that matter would a man be justified in turning his back upon all the opportunities for a useful life simply to retain the privilege of freely expressing his opinion?

(b) The personal problem comes to a climax in the relation of marriage. To a man with a high sense of self-respect and personal honour nothing will justify the assumption of the marriage relation except a condition of most perfect mutual sympathy; and commonly there is for him but one person with whom this perfect relation is possible. When, however, he reflects upon the matter he is confronted with certain questions of practical prudence. First, he is obliged to ask himself how far the woman of his choice will assist him, through her practical interest and knowledge, in meeting his professional and other responsibilities; for if the wife needs the support of the husband in affairs of the household, he is hardly less in need of her advice and assistance in the more general questions relating to his profession. Next, how far is she likely to be the mother of sound and healthy children, and how far also is she morally qualified, in matters of interest and temperament, to promote their general well-being? Then he must consider the question of ways and means. Perhaps he is a poor man and committed to a relatively unremunerative occupation. It is a common saying that "when poverty enters at the door love flies out of the window;" and at any rate it requires a more vital affection

and a finer courage to make marriage a success under conditions of poverty than under those of comfort. Supposing, then, that these practical conditions remain unfulfilled, would it not be wiser, and for that matter his duty, to sacrifice a certain perfection of sympathy in favour of conditions more conducive to the future health and well-being of his family? To a decent man this whole attitude of calculation is no doubt repulsive; yet the question is none the less real, — so real, indeed, that, generally speaking, it receives opposite answers on the two sides of the Atlantic. In our own country the moral sentiment is mainly on the side of personal sympathies; but a parent of Continental Europe would feel himself wanting in duty to his child if he did not insist upon a match in which the practical advantages were clearly in evidence. It may be that a truly noble mind would renounce marriage altogether rather than accept it with any qualification. We may even condemn the man who, having lost the first object of his choice, contents himself with another. But it must be remembered that for most men, if not for every man, marriage is a condition, not merely of physical health, but of a sane attitude toward the world in general; it thus contributes in an important manner to one's general usefulness. We may then at least raise the question as to whether a man is morally justified in renouncing it altogether simply because the conditions are not ideally perfect.

(c) One of the most serious of personal problems is that of political independence. In view of the vital importance to democratic institutions of a pure ballot, which shall represent nothing but the conscience and judgment of the voter, there seems to be no greater crime than that of submitting one's vote to the dictation of others. And yet there are probably few persons who are not at times constrained in some sense — by an unwillingness to give offence or to incur criticism — to vote against their better judgment. But it is among the ranks of unskilled labourers, especially of the foreign population, that



the situation becomes really acute. For the day labourer the ever pressing problem is that of securing work. Frequently his only recourse is to the local political boss, who, through his corrupt affiliations with corporations and contractors, holds the labour market under his patronage.<sup>1</sup> He has then to choose between becoming an active party to political corruption and inflicting starvation upon himself and family, reducing them perhaps to the level of tramps and outcasts. Considering his position, which would you regard as the side of duty, — that of personal honour and loyalty to his country, or that of subsistence for himself and family?

#### 4. GENERAL FEATURES OF THE MORAL PROBLEM

A preliminary review of the moral difficulties suggests that all are reducible to two general forms of problem. In the first of these we have a contradiction between the ideal and the practical. We find in ourselves two opposing tendencies, the one urging us to the practice of a higher and more strenuous moral ideal and to the realisation in ourselves of a more perfect type of humanity, the other calling upon us to make ourselves happy and comfortable in the conditions of life as we find them. When we contemplate the ideal for and by itself we are apt to feel that beside it nothing can have a true and final value, and that nothing can be in the end so deeply satisfying as the sense of having realised, to the full measure of our capacity, the ideal of an honourable and noble life. But it seems that the ideal is to be purchased only through a sacrifice of contentment and happiness; and when we place the alternatives side by side it becomes doubtful whether the attainment of ideal ends is worth what it costs. It seems possible that, under actual human conditions and for actual human nature, however it might be in a situation more ideal, the satisfaction of a high sense of honour,

<sup>1</sup> These conditions are admirably set forth in a paper by Miss Jane Addams on "Ethical Survivals in Municipal Corruption," *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. VIII, No. 3.

justice, and generosity, and a consistent attitude of respect for human nature, may be purchased at too great a sacrifice of more practical and substantial good. And when we contemplate our conditions more closely, and remember that we are after all physical creatures, with imperative physical needs, and restricted to temporal satisfactions, it becomes a question whether the pursuit of the ideal is not wholly illusory. It now seems that happiness is our fitting end, and that we are justified in making it the object of calm and deliberate endeavour. In this divergent sense of values we have the moral problem; it reduces itself to a contradiction between ideal and practical aims, between aspirations toward an ideal manhood and the demand for happiness.

In the second form we have a contradiction between the interests of humanity and self-interest. As a human being I am in sympathy with the purposes of human life generally, whether represented in my own person or in those of others. And in the practical exercise of this sympathy I seem to realise a higher and more generous type of human nature. But its exercise demands a frequent sacrifice of individual interests. And for this sacrifice we can find no rational ground; for, as an individual, my enjoyment of human existence is limited to a narrow range and to a short period of time, and there seems to be no real justification for any interest in human ends beyond the point where they are also my own ends. In this conflict between private interests and broader human sympathies we have again the moral problem.

In nearly all discussion of morals the problem is expressed in one of these forms — as a contradiction between aspirations toward an ideal manhood and the desire for happiness or contentment, or between the interests of humanity and those of self. From a preliminary inspection it would appear that we have to do with two distinct questions, the one referring to the nature or content of good, and the other to the manner of its distribution. But upon further analysis, which must be post-

poned to later chapters, we shall see that the two questions are ultimately identical.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the identity may also be inferred from the attitudes which men commonly take with regard to the two questions. *A priori* it would seem that the nature of good is unrelated to the manner in which good is to be distributed, that we may aim at ideal ends while desiring to appropriate the results to ourselves and at material ends while actuated only by the interests of society. But we find that men who show the most appreciation for practical and material goods are also those who believe most strongly in the rationality of self-interest; and that those who show the strongest appreciation of ideal aims are relatively unmindful of their own interests as such and most insistent upon self-sacrifice in others. Our later analysis will endeavour to show the ground of these relations; for the present let us assume that the moral problem may be stated indifferently as a conflict between ideal and practical aims or between the interests of humanity and of self.

## 5. THE FORMS OF ETHICAL THEORY

The two sides of the question are represented by two general tendencies in ethical theory. The theory representing the claims of material needs and self-interest is called *hedonism*. Hedonism (from the Greek *ἡδονή*, pleasure) teaches that the object of moral endeavour is pleasure or happiness. It has been sometimes called utilitarianism, by which it is meant that right conduct is determined by a calculation of utilities; and we shall see that the attempt to formulate a method of calculation leads naturally to a hedonistic standpoint.<sup>2</sup> The claims of ideal and disinterested aims are represented by a form of theory which I shall designate as *idealism*. Idealism teaches that the

<sup>1</sup> No special argument is offered for this point; it will be sufficiently obvious from the analysis of social theories contained in chapters v and xii. The opposite view, *i.e.* that material or spiritual aims may be indifferently selfish or social, is held by Sidgwick (*Methods of Ethics*, Book I, ch. vii) and by Wundt, who agree in calling Spinoza an egoistic perfectionist.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. vii, 4.

object of moral endeavour is to realise the demands of an ideal and perfect human nature. In our own day the theory is more commonly known as the theory of self-realisation, in which form it teaches that right conduct is the realisation of the capacities of our nature. It is also called perfectionism. And Paulsen has given it the name of energism, meaning that right conduct is active endeavour rather than passive enjoyment. In the history of philosophy it has been known generally as the theory of rationalism, in which form it advocated a 'life according to reason' as opposed to a life of sensual indulgence. But 'rationalism,' as it is commonly used, is apt to convey the implication that moral conduct is a matter of intellectual consistency, without reference to the demands of desire. It thus introduces a qualification which is not recognised in the latest forms of idealistic theory, and which, I believe, does not really represent the position aimed at in rationalism itself.<sup>1</sup>

In distinguishing ethical theory as hedonistic and idealistic, it is not meant to imply that all forms of ethical theory may be separated into two sharply distinct and mutually exclusive classes. On the contrary, we have to think of them rather as constituting a graded series of variations with an extreme form of hedonism at one end and an extreme form of idealism at the other. The extreme positions are very rarely held. The position of most moralists is one in which a predominant tendency to one side or the other is to an extent counteracted by a measure of tendency in the opposite direction. But in general we may distinguish two types, representing two opposing tendencies. These tendencies have persisted in their opposition throughout the history of philosophy. The form in which their conflict is stated and the standpoint from which it has been treated have been constantly changing, but the opposition itself has been a permanent feature in ethical thought. The conflict between hedonism and idealism is simply a modern development of the ancient conflict between epicureanism and stoicism.

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. x, 4.

This opposition is, however, far from being confined to the question of conduct. It resolves itself ultimately into a fundamental opposition of temperament ; and the difficulty expressed in the ethical problem is simply that which men of opposite temperament find in the attempt to appreciate the attitude of each other toward life in general. The hedonism of a hedonist is shown (though often unconsciously) in all its practical activities and in all his expressions of opinion. His hedonistic ethics is but a single aspect of his view of life as a whole. This view of life as it expresses itself with a relative lack of self-consciousness constitutes his temperament ; if subjected to a detailed analysis and brought to a complete self-consciousness, it would constitute his system of philosophy.

Our object in the following chapters will be, then, first to obtain a clear statement of the points of view designated respectively as hedonism and idealism, and of the point at issue between them, and at the same time to ascertain the value of each from the standpoint of common sense. We shall then endeavour to discover how far and in what sense there lies behind the antagonism of ethical theories a deeper basis of agreement, and to what degree we may combine them for purposes of practical guidance. In this we assume — as, indeed, we must assume if ethical theory is to hold any relation to objective truth and practical life — that, in spite of the differences of temperament and theory, there is after all a certain underlying unity and sympathy due to a common human nature and to similar conditions of life.

On the moral problem, see Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*, ch. ii; Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, ch. i; Ladd, *The Philosophy of Conduct*, ch. i; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, Book I, ch. i.

On the classification of ethical theory, see Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ch. i, pp. 1, 2, 122-130 (3d ed.); Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 77-80; Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*, Book II, ch. ii; Muirhead (cited above), p. 89; Murray, *Introduction to Ethics*, p. 143; Wundt, *Ethics*, Vol. II, ch. iv.



PART I  
HEDONISM





## CHAPTER III

### EMPIRICAL HEDONISM: THE ETHICS OF HAPPINESS

#### 1. GENERAL STATEMENT

THE hedonistic view is thus stated by Mill:<sup>1</sup> "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure. To give a clear view of the moral standard set up by the theory, much more requires to be said; in particular what things it includes in the ideas of pain and pleasure; and to what extent this is left an open question. But these supplementary questions do not affect the theory of life on which the theory of morality is grounded — namely, that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain."

But the search for happiness is often complicated by the presence of alternatives, each of which promises happiness or freedom from pain, while at the same time the happiness obtained from one source will involve pain and unhappiness from the other. I wish to enjoy my cup of coffee at dinner and yet to sleep comfortably afterward; or to enjoy my evening

<sup>1</sup> *Utilitarianism*, ch. ii.

paper or novel in privacy and quiet, yet not to exclude the other members of the household from the common sitting-room. It is the presence of these conflicting alternatives which constitutes the moral problem. According to hedonism, the solution lies in the selection of that course which offers the *greater* pleasure. I ought to prefer the more extended pleasure of a good night's sleep to the momentary pleasure afforded by a cup of coffee, the greater happiness<sup>1</sup> of my family, or my neighbours, or of the whole community, to the smaller happiness of individual comfort. This does not mean that the future is in all cases to be preferred to the present, or the interests of others to my own interest. Doubtless this is its more common and practical meaning; for our usual tendency is to neglect the future in favour of the present, the interests of others in favour of our own. Strictly speaking, however, I am to choose simply the *greater* happiness, without regard to whether it is my own or another's, the happiness of the present or of the future. If the sacrifice of present to future promised to result in less happiness, it would not be justifiable; it would then be my duty to prefer the present.

This theory of conduct is based upon the fact, as hedonism conceives it, that happiness and freedom from pain constitute ultimately our sole object of desire. I say 'ultimately' because it must be noted that hedonism does not deny that, in their immediate content, our motives and desires may have no reference to happiness, or that they may be even inconsistent with it. For practical purposes it is necessary to regard certain values as settled. It is impossible that each act should be preceded by a special calculation. I make it a rule to tell

<sup>1</sup> 'Pleasure' refers usually to particular satisfactions, 'happiness' to more general satisfactions. I prefer in practice to disregard this distinction, though some moralists lay great weight upon it (see Seth's 'Eudæmonism' and 'Hedonism'). The emphasis laid upon the distinction between pleasure and happiness is often nothing but a means of evading the issue. We do not escape the consequences of hedonism by saying, "It is not pleasure but happiness that we seek."

the truth because I assume that the value of truth-telling has been worked out and its desirability established; and then, forgetting the basis of the calculation, I come to think of truthfulness as having a value in itself without regard to its conduciveness to happiness. Moreover, in the absence of a special calculation, or of a correct calculation, it is possible that our desires may be set upon objects really inconsistent with happiness, and also that, in the absence of reflection generally, or of a complete self-consciousness with regard to our motives, we may not yet have discovered where our real happiness lies. Indeed, it is just this fact, that men do not consistently give themselves to the pursuit of happiness, which creates for the hedonist the need of a moral science. Accordingly, when he claims that all our desires are for happiness, he does not mean that this is necessarily our immediate object. He means rather that when, on the one hand, we carefully question our sense of value, we find that nothing but happiness appears to be intrinsically desirable; and that when, on the other hand, we examine the actions of men, we find that, though many of them appear on the surface to be inconsistent with the desire for happiness, yet all point to that desire as the ultimate underlying motive. This holds even of those desires which require apparently a large sacrifice of happiness, such as the desires for honesty and justice and for the good of others; when we examine them carefully we find that the particular sacrifice demanded is generally more than repaid by the increase of happiness in general. Since, then, all human desires resolve themselves ultimately into the desire for happiness, happiness must be regarded as constituting the substance of human good, and right conduct must then be that by which happiness is most effectively obtained.

## 2. THE HEDONISTIC METHOD .

So much for a preliminary statement. For a clearer conception it is necessary that we now examine more closely, first

the method of hedonism, and then the resulting conception of pleasure and duty.

The method of hedonism is that of quantitative comparison, or calculation. In other words, hedonism is a mathematical theory of conduct. Its solution of a moral problem is a process of addition and subtraction. Add together all the pleasures promised by a contemplated course of action, then the pains, and take the difference; the nature of the difference will determine whether the course is right or wrong.

Now the primary condition of calculation is a fixed standard. To estimate a quantity of pleasure we must choose from among the possible objects of desire one which shall serve as a fixed basis for the measurement of the others, and which shall always be what we mean when we speak of pleasure. It would be unnecessary to emphasise so elementary a requirement were it not so commonly disregarded in hedonistic ethics. A very common mode of argument is the following: We say that some one is a 'man of pleasure,' or that he cares for nothing but pleasure, having for the moment a certain limitation of 'pleasure' clearly in mind; we mean usually that he is a lover of good dinners, of social gaieties, or of athletic sports. Then we go on to compare these desires with others. The love of out-door sports has something in common with a general love of nature, and this, again, with a love of music and art; these with a love of literature and scientific investigation; these interests have, finally, the same general character as our interest in political and social questions. Noting, then, that there is a merely gradual transition from the lowest forms of animal enjoyment to the highest satisfactions of intellect and taste, we arrive at the conclusion that all our desires are directed indiscriminately toward pleasure; one man, we say, loves horses, another loves knowledge, but ultimately both are seeking the same object, namely, happiness. But this is not the argument of a scientific hedonist. To lump all of our desires together and to name them indiscriminately 'desires for pleasure' would render the hedonistic theory

both theoretically and practically meaningless. As a theory it would then be indistinguishable from any other theory, since any pursuit whatever would be a pursuit of pleasure ; and for this reason it would fail also to offer any specific practical guidance. Accordingly, when a hedonist uses the word 'pleasure' he does not mean merely 'satisfaction' in general, but a particular form of satisfaction, or the satisfaction arising from the attainment of a particular kind of object. This particular form of satisfaction furnishes him with a fixed standard and a constant meaning for his conception of happiness. And when he now claims that all desires are directed toward pleasure, what he means is not that they are all indistinguishably hedonistic but that they are so many varying quantities of the particular form assumed as a standard. When we keep this distinction in mind, the theory acquires an intelligible meaning and offers a definite practical guidance. An indefinite injunction to seek 'pleasure' may mean anything you like ; but when pleasure is understood to indicate the sort of satisfaction obtained, let us say, from a good dinner, the search for pleasure becomes a definite selection of certain activities to the exclusion of others.

Our fixed standard must be also an objective standard. This is another condition which, though obvious, is nevertheless in need of emphasis. For it is commonly said that in matters of pleasure objective standards are meaningless, the recipient of pleasure being the sole judge of value. But this, again, is not the position of hedonism ; for the pleasure which hedonism urges me to consider is not merely that of the present moment, but of all the moments of my life and of all the persons whose interests are concerned. On the basis of subjective and individual valuation this is clearly impossible. In spending according to the mood of to-day I may underestimate the need of to-morrow, and in planning a dinner according to my own tastes I may fail to satisfy those of my guests. Which estimate of pleasure is to be accepted ? My own or that of others affected by my actions ? The estimate of the present moment or that of

the future? It is evident that an adjustment of these conflicting interests requires a standard of valuation upon which all will agree,—in other words, an objective standard with authority superior to that of individual expressions of value.

But for purposes of quantitative comparison our standard must be expressed in terms of simple (*i.e.* homogeneous and equal) units. When we speak of one object as offering more pleasure than another, we necessarily mean *more of the same kind*, for we cannot add or subtract except where objects are of the same kind. Apples added to pears gives neither more apples nor more pears. But ‘more of the same kind’ means simply a greater number of equal units. When we speak of more heat we mean a greater number of degrees on the thermometric scale, each degree being assumed to represent the same amount of heat. And so it must be with ‘more pleasure.’ When I say that a given apple offers more pleasure than a given pear, I mean that both feelings of pleasure are composed of equal and homogeneous units of pleasant feeling, of which that excited by the taste of the apple contains the greater number. And I mean the same thing when I say that the pleasure to be derived from a devotion to art, to learning, or to public service is greater than that obtained from self-indulgence.

Theoretically, then, the hedonistic method is identical with the method of physical science. The latter is illustrated in the measurement of heat. Measurement, whether of heat or of pleasure, implies an objective numerical standard,—a standard superior in authority to individual estimates, yet derived ultimately from individual estimates. The readings of the thermometer are assumed to be more accurate than the particular declarations of the thermal sense; yet they rest ultimately upon sense-perception,—upon the common experience that water feels hotter as it approaches the boiling point and colder as it approaches the freezing point. Now it is evident that we have no similar instrument for the measurement



of pleasure and pain. Such an instrument is not inconceivable, and, indeed, numerous experiments have already been made with a view to its construction. For example, it has been thought possible to establish a correspondence between feelings of pleasure and pain and variations in blood-pressure, the latter being indicated by kymographic tracings on smoked paper. If this correspondence were conclusively established, we should have, in the kymograph and its accessories, what might be called a thermometer for pleasure and pain, and we should, at any rate, be able to obtain an objective statement of the pleasure-value of the more common objects. But the correspondence is still far from established; and in view of the complexity of conditions surrounding our feelings of pleasure and pain, it seems unlikely that any similar correspondence will be established in the near future. In the meantime the calculation of pleasure and pain remains a matter of empirical estimation.

Such estimation still presupposes, however, as a guiding and controlling principle, the requirements of quantitative comparison. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the hedonistic comparison of pleasures is always an attempt to realise the ideal represented by physical measurements. Pleasure, like heat, is assumed to be an experience common to the race. Like heat, it is assumed to have certain well-defined and universally recognised marks of identification; it is as clear that a good dinner is a pleasure as that boiling water is hot. And, like heat, pleasure is assumed to vary in intensity and duration, its *quantity* being the numerical product of the two factors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a clear statement of hedonistic method see Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy*, chs. i, ii, iii; see also Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book II, chs. ii and iii.

"The fundamental assumption of hedonism, clearly stated, is that all feelings considered merely as feelings can be arranged in a certain scale of desirability, so that the desirability or pleasantness of each bears a definite ratio to that of all the others." — SIDGWICK.

Note the mathematical presupposition contained in the following 'axioms' of Bentham, *Deontology*, Vol. II, pp. 19 ff. (ed. Bowring, 1834):—

## 3. THE RESULTING CONCEPTION OF PLEASURE

From the foregoing it follows that by 'pleasure' the hedonist means the pleasures of sense.<sup>1</sup> The exact nature of sense-pleasures will appear more fully later. For the present they may be understood to be the satisfactions of food and sex, those arising from odours and perhaps from simple sounds and colours, from contact with smooth and soft objects, from sleep and

Happiness may be defined to be the presence of pleasures with the absence of pains, or the possession of a preponderant amount of pleasure over pain.

These pleasures and pains may be either negative or positive, growing out of the absence of the one, or the presence of the other.

The value of a pleasure, separately considered, depends on its intensity, duration, and extent. On those qualities its importance to society turns; or in other words, its power of adding to the sum of individual and of general happiness.

The magnitude of a pleasure depends upon its intensity and duration.

The extent of a pleasure depends upon the number of persons who enjoy it.

The magnitude of a pleasure or a pain, in any one of its qualities, may compensate or overbalance its deficiency on any other.

The benevolence of a man must be measured by the number of beings out of whose pains and pleasures he draws his own pleasures and pains of sympathy.

The virtues of a man must be measured by the number of persons whose happiness he seeks to promote; that is, the greatest portion and happiness to each, taking into amount the sacrifice which he knowingly makes of his own happiness.

When the amounts of pleasures and pains are balanced, the balance of pleasure is the evidence of virtue, the balance of pain the evidence of vice.

"According to hedonism," says Leslie Stephen, "the only primitive property which can be attributed to man is the desire for happiness; and we must conceive of happiness as a kind of emotional currency, capable of being calculated and distributed in 'lots,' which have a certain definite value independent of any special taste of the individual. Conduct, then, is moral or immoral according as it tends to swell or diminish the volume of this hypothetical currency. Pains and pleasures can be handed about like pieces of money, and we have simply to calculate how to gain a maximum of pleasure and a minimum of pain."

<sup>1</sup> "Man being by nature sensible of no other pleasures than those of the senses, these pleasures are consequently the only object of his desires and passions, viz., avarice, ambition, pride, and friendship." — HELVETIUS, *De l'Esprit*, Essay III, ch. ix, Engl. transl., p. 251.



good digestion. In general they are the pleasures of health, organic gratification, and material prosperity.

This conception of pleasure is, in the first place, the necessary consequence of the assumption of an objective standard. For an objective standard must be sought in a form of pleasure which is universal in the race and permanent in the individual. On any other basis a calculation of pleasure would be partial and incomplete, leaving out of consideration some of the individuals and some of the periods of individual lives, whose interests are in question. Now it is clear that the only sort of pleasure which fulfils this requirement is the pleasure of sense. Desire for such pleasures is the only form which is common to the civilised and savage, to the more cultivated and the less cultivated. It is the only form which is common to all periods of life, and which persists through variations of mood and point of view. The desires of sense are thus the only desires that are permanent and universal. It is true that certain writers of the hedonistic school (*e.g.* Paley<sup>1</sup>) in common with many of the more popular moralists, have declared against the search for sensuous satisfaction on just this ground, namely, that sensuous pleasure is never permanent, and on grounds of greater permanency have recommended a preference for the satisfactions of intellect and feeling. But here, as it seems, they overlook the insistency of the sensuous desires. One may suppress a craving for intellectual or æsthetic gratification, or even for sympathetic companionship, but the appetite for food cannot be suppressed. If not satisfied, it grows rapidly more intense, and soon occupies the whole field of consciousness, rendering any other form of activity or desire impossible. Moreover, the sensuous satisfaction is an antecedent condition of any other form of satisfaction, since, in order to enjoy the higher pleasures of intellect and feeling, it is, generally speaking, first necessary to be physically comfortable. Consequently, although the pleasures of intellect and feeling may be more

<sup>1</sup> *Moral Philosophy*, Book I, ch. vi.

permanent, in the sense that they are not followed by painful reactions, yet it is clear that, as compared with the sensuous pleasures, the demand for them, and the pain which ensues when the demand is unsatisfied, is relatively temporary and occasional. The pleasures of sense are thus the only ones whose pleasant character is universally appreciated, and hence the only ones which have a clear and objective value.

This conception of pleasure is, in the second place, the necessary consequence of the assumption of a single unit of pleasure. It is conceivable that the various forms of pleasure might be all compounds of simple units, though the units had never existed apart from the compounds. But if, as hedonism holds,<sup>1</sup> all forms have been compounded *historically* from simple forms, then we have to assume that at one time the simple forms were to be found in isolation, or at least in a very elementary form of composition. The simple forms, or the nearest approach to them, must then be those which, in the order of history, were the first to appear. This would lead again to the pleasures of sense. For in order of race development it is the elementary animal necessities which first demand attention and first become the determinants of pleasure and pain. They constitute also, within the individual lives of a more advanced civilisation, the first demands of childhood, the more spiritual necessities not pressing their claims until a later period.

#### 4. PLEASURE AND DUTY

We see, then, that among the several objects which are felt to be pleasant by various men in various moods, the hedonist distinguishes that which is permanently pleasant to all men at all times, and makes it his standard of value, his original constituent and type of pleasure. Having thus set up his standard, he proceeds to apply it to all the forms of desire not imme-

<sup>1</sup> This will appear more clearly in the next chapter.

diately covered by it,— to the love of honour and justice, the love of liberty, the love of beauty and knowledge. Since nothing has any intrinsic value but the pleasure of sense, it follows that none of these objects has any value except as it may in some way contribute to those pleasures, that is, except as it promises ultimately a greater amount of sense-pleasure than that to be obtained by obedience to the immediate sensuous impulse. Now it is the hedonist's object to show that, even on the score of sense-pleasure, these objects will generally justify the attention commonly thought to be due them. And in fact this is his argument for hedonistic ethics before the bar of common sense. Not that he intends to justify all the respect that is commonly offered them. For since the pursuit of honour, of liberty, of justice, and the like, are only *means* of obtaining sense-pleasure, the hedonist intends that we shall give them somewhat less attention than we are in the habit of doing and seek more directly their end; and if this were not the case, his message would have no practical meaning. What he undertakes to show is rather that our respect for the higher objects is sufficiently in accord with the demands of sensuous pleasure to warrant the assumption that sensuous pleasure furnishes the real motive for seeking them.

Let us, therefore, look briefly at some of the ways in which the connection of pleasure and duty is established.

First, the duty of honour and truthfulness. We tend commonly to think of honour and truth as having in themselves a value superior to that of the satisfactions of sense. This is sometimes expressed by saying that the pleasures of truth and honour are a higher and more valuable kind of pleasure, and it is on the basis of this higher quality that we justify the sacrifices of sense-pleasure which honour frequently demands. But this is not the hedonistic justification. If honour required a real sacrifice of sensuous pleasure, then, according to hedonism, the pleasure supposed to be derived from it would be illusory and should be rejected. The hedonist justifies our regard for

honour on the ground of sense-pleasure itself. In reality, he believes, it is one of the most important and elementary conditions of sense-pleasure. For in the absence of a general observance of veracity and a condition of mutual confidence, it would be impossible to maintain any form of activity, to secure any kind of result. If we could not rely upon our neighbours to keep their contracts, or upon the courts to enforce contracts and to secure us the possession of our property, it would be impossible either to engage in commerce or to produce for ourselves any of the necessities of life. Accordingly, the hedonist attaches a high value to truth and honour, — not because the satisfaction of honour is a pleasure higher in quality than that offered by the incitements of sense, but because its results, in terms of sensuous pleasure itself, are ultimately greater in quantity.

Next, the duties of temperance and chastity. We commonly value these virtues for their intrinsic quality, as important elements of self-respect and dignity of character ; and the corresponding vices of lewdness and drunkenness we conceive to be intrinsically contemptible. But this is not the ground upon which they are judged by hedonism. If the pleasures of intoxication could be enjoyed without the subsequent painful reaction, there would be no reason, from a hedonistic standpoint, why intoxication should not be made one of the important objects of human life. And similarly, except for the various physical evils which result from it, there would be no reason for objecting to indiscriminate sexual relations. In the pleasures which these vices seek, there is, from a hedonistic standpoint, nothing intrinsically contemptible, and there is nothing intrinsically lovely in the corresponding virtues. Their character as vices and virtues is due wholly to their consequences. Intemperance in food and drink is followed by headache and indigestion ; persistent intemperance means an early surrender to chronic disease and pain ; whereas the temperate man enjoys to the end of his life a moderate but steady and undiminished

supply of health and sensuous pleasure. It is this, then, that constitutes the virtuous character of temperance,—not that restraint upon sensuous impulse has any value in itself, but that, through such restraint, we obtain on the whole a larger amount of sensuous gratification.<sup>1</sup>

Among the ends which it is our duty to strive for is liberty. A large part of human effort has been spent in the struggle for liberty; men have sacrificed their lives for its sake, and we approve of their choice. The sacrifices made for liberty are usually justified on the ground of its intrinsic value. And sometimes this is expressed by saying that to be a free and responsible agent is a pleasure in itself. But this again is not the hedonistic view. For the hedonist, the pleasure of liberty as such is an illusion. When he justifies the demand for liberty—and it is to be noted that his justification is not without qualification—he conceives it as a means, like honesty, for the increase of material welfare. When, for example, he justifies a system of individual effort and individual ownership as opposed to a state socialism, it is because he believes that, owing to the incentive to activity contained in a reward for individual effort, the material prosperity of the community—hence, the sum total of sensuous pleasure—will be more effectively maintained under a system of liberty than under any other system. Otherwise a system of communism, state socialism, or even of despotism and slavery, might be preferable.

Common sense holds that science and literature represent worthier ends than sensuous indulgence, and, as opposed to

<sup>1</sup> "But these pleasures of sex stand on the same ground as every other pleasure. . . .

"Is not chastity, then, a virtue? Most undoubtedly, and a virtue of high deserving. And why? Not because it diminishes, but because it heightens enjoyment.

"Is not temperance a virtue? Ay, assuredly is it. But wherefore? Because by restraining enjoyment for a time, it afterwards elevates it to that very pitch which leaves, on the whole, the largest addition to the stock of happiness."—BENTHAM, *Deontology*, Vol. II, pp. 86–87.

mere sensuous indulgence, makes a preference for the former a duty. Moreover, we recommend them as pleasures, but as pleasures of superior quality. The hedonist also recommends them, but solely on the basis of quantity. To him the pursuit of knowledge is, as compared with the common forms of sensuous indulgence, simply a more refined and intelligent method of seeking sensuous pleasure. The 'intellectual pleasures' as such are an illusion. If these alone were at issue, the enormous sacrifices made in behalf of science and education by individuals, and by society as a whole, would represent a total waste of effort. But we find that these sacrifices are ultimately more than repaid by the improvement in health and in methods of production which science offers us. And what is true of science, in the narrower sense, is true also of mental development in general. A hedonist is disposed to favour the more technical studies, but any branch of learning may conceivably receive his approval. Higher mathematics, metaphysics, even Greek, Latin, and the Semitic languages, may be recommended by him as important features in a general mental training. But the only real value of such training is its tendency to improve our physical welfare.

On the same ground he justifies the attention given to art, — the cultivation of which we also regard as to some extent a duty. For the hedonist the superiority of æsthetic gratification lies in its greater purity and uncostliness. But 'purity' does not mean, as the term might seem to imply, a gratification superior in quality to the simple gratifications of sense. On the contrary, artistic gratification is in itself sensuous. Art means the reproduction in some degree, through the mere images of objects, of the sensuous pleasures which the objects themselves would give. But, as compared with the realities, the images offer a finer, that is, a more subtle and effective, form of enjoyment. This is due to the elimination of the disagreeable features which as a rule are unavoidably attached to the real objects. Thus the painter, in presenting a landscape,



carefully avoids any suggestion of the many unpleasant features by which our enjoyment of nature is often diminished. He offers us the mountains, woods, and lakes in all their delightful aspects, without the weariness, the dampness, the sunburn, and the attacks of insects. Or in presenting a human figure — the figure, for example, of a peasant girl — he leaves out the coarseness of skin and feature, the harshness of voice, the rudeness of manner, and the absence of personal cleanliness, by which our pleasure in the contemplation of the object itself is often spoiled. It is in this way that the pleasures of art have a superior purity to those of sense, — not that they are finer in quality, but that they are less complicated by the presence of pain. Now the pleasures obtained through imagination are of course relatively weak in intensity ; but when we remember, in addition to their purity, the number of persons who may derive enjoyment from a single beautiful image as compared with the number who may enjoy its original, and the indefinite period through which such enjoyment may be repeated, it would seem that the pursuit of art were well worth the sacrifice which common sense urges us to make for it. The hedonistic attitude toward art is thus in accord with his attitude toward other objects : the superiority of beauty over simple sensuous enjoyment is ultimately an advantage of quantity alone.<sup>1</sup>

We see, then, that for the hedonist the difference between virtue and vice, between the good man and the bad man, is ultimately nothing more than a difference in the method of obtaining sensuous pleasure. There are no intrinsic differences of character or quality. All the desires, the impulses, the tastes, and the ideals of all men have ultimately but the one meaning ; none of them is anything more than a demand for sensuous enjoyment. The different ways in which the demand is expressed are due to the different circumstances in which men

<sup>1</sup> Quantity of pleasure remaining the same, push-pin is as good as poetry. — BENTHAM.

have lived, and (as a result of their circumstances) to the different extent to which men are able to conform to them. The difference between the good man and the bad man is thus a difference, ultimately, of intellectual power. It is the same as the difference between man and animal. Socrates and the fool and the pig have after all the same tastes. All that any of them wants is sensuous pleasure. But Socrates goes about his task more intelligently. The fool or the pig yields to the momentary impulse without reflecting that he thereby chooses the less pleasure on the whole. Socrates takes a wider view, and does not forget to give the remote pleasure the same consideration as he would give to that near at hand.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. MILL'S DISTINCTION OF QUANTITY AND QUALITY

In opposition to the foregoing interpretation of hedonism John Stuart Mill holds that hedonism does not estimate pleasure by quantity alone, but also by quality. The point is of such importance for an understanding of hedonistic theory that I shall quote at length the well-known passage in which Mill's position is stated.

Mill says:<sup>2</sup> "There is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation. It must be admitted, however, that the utilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures

<sup>1</sup> Vice may be defined to be a miscalculation of chances, a mistake in estimating the value of pleasures and pains. It is false moral arithmetic.

— *Deontology*, Vol. I, p. 131.

The ablest moralist will be he who calculates best, and the most virtuous man will be he who most successfully applies the right calculation to conduct.

— *Deontology*, Vol. II, p. 77.

It will be interesting to compare these passages from Bentham with the more modern, and no doubt more discriminating, analysis of the virtues by Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book IV, ch. iii, — based, however, on a much less definite conception of 'pleasure.'

<sup>2</sup> *Utilitarianism*, ch. ii.



chiefly in the greater permanence, safety, uncostliness, etc., of the former—that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than in their intrinsic nature. And on all points utilitarians have fully proved their case; but they might have taken the other and, as it may be called, higher ground, with entire consistency. It is quite compatible with the principle of Utility to recognise the fact that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasure should be supposed to depend upon quantity alone. . . .

“Now, it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both [higher and lower pleasure], do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals for the promise of the fullest allowance of the beast’s pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs. . . . It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.”

It will be seen that the force of Mill’s argument lies in its appeal to common experience. Here it seems that in estimating the values of things we use the criteria both of quantity and of quality, and that we find no difficulty in using the two in combination. It would seem, then, that if we can combine them successfully in other valuations, there is no reason why they should not be combined in the valuation of pleasure. But when we examine our experience more carefully, we find that, even in the ordinary cases, we do not really combine them. Either we are able to translate the requirements of one into

terms of the other, in which case we use one criterion only, or where such substitution is impossible, we make one criterion absolute and the other subordinate, to be considered only after the first is fully satisfied.<sup>1</sup> In buying a pair of boots, for example, I may consider either their durability (quantity), or the quality of the leather and workmanship. Either the quality is related to the durability or it is not. In the latter case, where the better quality is not proportionately more durable, I have to choose between quality and quantity. Either I insist upon a certain quality as indispensable, and choose the most durable of that quality; or I make the greater durability an absolute criterion, and choose the best quality compatible with it. But one criterion or the other must be primary and absolute while the alternative remains secondary and subordinate, to be considered only after the first is satisfied, — *unless*, indeed, the quality is so related to the durability that one can be expressed in terms of the other. In this case I reduce both to the same form of expression. I conclude, for instance, that a pair of boots costing six dollars will outwear two pairs costing each three dollars, and make my choice accordingly. But in this case quality is no longer an independent criterion, but only another name for quantity; and he who now judges by *quantity and quality* will reach the same result as he who judges by quantity alone.

The same holds true for the comparison of pleasures. Either quality is only another name for quantity, or it is opposed to quantity and yields different results. The double criterion is therefore in the former case meaningless and in the latter self-contradictory. Estimating pleasure by quantity, I may choose to become rich; estimating it by quality, I may choose also to be honest. But if honesty is nothing more than the best policy for one who would be rich, it is useless to add the

<sup>1</sup> I am assuming that we make a deliberate effort to act reasonably. Our actual choice in such matters represents more often an unconscious and illogical compromise.

injunction to be honest to the injunction to be rich. The command to be rich simply repeats the command to be honest and is consequently meaningless. But if honesty is not always the best road to riches, then the command to be honest will contradict the command to be rich; in other words, quantity and quality will involve the performance of mutually incompatible activities. The only possible means of using both will then be to make one absolute and the other subordinate. I may be as honest as I can be without sacrificing wealth to that end, or I may be as rich as an honest man can be.

Mill attempts to avoid this consequence by the claim that the higher quality *is* also the greater quantity. The pleasures of intellect and feeling are not only intrinsically superior to those of sense, but they are also cheaper, safer, and more permanent.<sup>1</sup> But this, it would seem, if it means anything at all, amounts to a prejudgment of the whole question at issue. If it is anything more than a merely verbal definition of the higher pleasures by the greater quantity, — if it does anything more than call the greater ‘higher,’ — it must mean that those commonly judged to be of higher quality are in reality merely greater in quantity; that pleasures of intellect and feeling, and of good conscience, are not, as we commonly suppose, irreducibly different from sense-pleasure, but only more efficient methods of obtaining sense-pleasure. Now this is just the question at issue between hedonism and opposite schools. The most pronounced of the opponents of hedonism could safely allow the various desirable ends to be called ‘pleasures’ if only he might add that they were to be chosen according to quality alone. The whole question at issue between the schools is really nothing more than the question of the possibility of reducing quality to quantity. Is honesty nothing more than the best means of material advancement? Is the higher culture nothing more than an improved method of obtaining sensuous gratification? When Mill asserts that the higher

<sup>1</sup> See the passage quoted on p. 53.

quality is always the greater quantity, he answers both these questions in the affirmative, and assumes as a basis of argument the whole matter in dispute.<sup>1</sup>

**Hedonistic Literature.** The following are the more important hedonistic writers: Hobbes, *On Human Nature* (1650), *Leviathan* (1651); Mandeville, *Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714); Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690); Gay, *Concerning Virtue and Morality* (1731) (Selby-Bigge's *British Moralists*, Vol. II); Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739-40); *Enquiry concerning Morals* (1748-51); Hartley, *Observations on Man* (1749); Helvetius, *De l'Esprit* (1758); Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780), *Deontology* (ed. Bowring) (1834); Paley, *Moral Philosophy* (1785); James Mill, *Analysis of the Human Mind* (1829); John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1861); Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics* (1874); Spencer, *Principles of Ethics* (1879-93); Höffding, *Ethik* (1888).

The classical document of hedonism is J. S. Mill's *Utilitarianism*, combining to a rare degree a high moral tone with perfect balance and good sense, but confused and inconsistent in its statement of theory. The typical exponent of the hedonistic attitude is Bentham, a loose, unphilosophical, yet entertaining writer. With him belongs Paley, a much more solid thinker, whose hedonism had also a theological basis. The sensuous and egoistic (see ch. v) basis of hedonism is revealed more clearly in the cynical yet naïve attitude of Hobbes, Mandeville, and Helvetius, and in Gay's essay. The latter suggested to Hartley the possibility of giving the hedonistic theory a psychological basis in the theory of association, which was elaborated with more clearness and detail by James Mill. Hobbes and Locke held a hedonistic theory of motive with a non-hedonistic criterion of duty. Hume's *Treatise* is distinctly hedonistic, the *Enquiry* much less so. The most careful and exhaustive review of hedonism is given by Sidgwick. The later hedonistic writers, such as Sidgwick and Höffding, have broken away to some extent from the traditions of the school. Hardly hedonistic in form and structure, yet distinctly so in tone, is A. E. Taylor's recent work on *The Problem of Conduct*. Spencer is the exponent of evolutionary hedonism.

<sup>1</sup> On the quantity and quality of pleasure see Grote, *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, ch. iii; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, pp. 105 ff.; Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book II, Branch I, ch. i, i, § 5; Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book I, ch. vii; Jevons, *John Stuart Mill's Philosophy Tested*, ch. on Utilitarianism (in volume entitled *Pure Logic and other Minor Works*).

For expositions of hedonistic theory see Watson, *Hedonistic Theories*; Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ch. i, pp. 6-33 (3d ed.); Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 81 ff. (historical); Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, Book II, ch. ii; Taylor (cited above), ch. vi; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay iii; Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book II, Branch I (an exceedingly clear statement, historical and critical).

For a history of hedonism, showing the development of hedonistic theory, see Albee's recent work, *A History of English Utilitarianism*; for a history of hedonism as a social and political movement, see Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCIENTIFIC HEDONISM: THE ETHICS OF SELF-PRESERVATION

#### 1. EVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND ETHICS

SINCE the time of Newton nothing has so extended the range of exact science as the conception of evolution. Before the formulation of the evolutionary hypothesis there was but one strictly scientific conception in which the nature of anything could be expressed. The only question to be asked about an object was, What is it made of? And the only answer that fulfilled the demands of science was one which stated the elements of which the object was composed and the manner of their composition. A category of this kind was obviously limited to subject-matter of the sort where it was possible to find elements which would remain always the same, and which could be dissolved and recomposed; and consequently the only sciences, in the stricter sense, were those of physics and chemistry. There was no real science of biology. In its place there was natural history, which made a survey of the facts and attempted a convenient classification of them. But neither observation nor classification was directed by any clear attempt to formulate a theory or to conceive the particular facts as expressions of natural law; for there was no conception at hand upon which a law of nature could be built. This need was supplied by the conception of evolution. The evolutionary category asks with regard to an object, not merely what it is made of, but also where it came from and how it got here. In other words, it investigates not merely the actual composition



of an object, but the history of its compounding. The former question was applicable only to those objects which could be taken apart and reconstructed; the latter applies to everything conceived to have a continuous individual history,—to a plant, an animal, a mind, a theory, an institution, a nation. Accordingly, with the introduction of the new conception the possibilities of science, in the strict sense, have been indefinitely extended. The natural historian could only wonder at the mixture of similarity and difference in the plants and animals; for the student of languages the variety and similarity of dialects was merely a curious fact. But when once it is suggested that objects which now appear to be different may be related in their historical development, the differences and similarities immediately fall into a system of relations, and instead of mere observation and description we have a science.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the change brought about when the conception of evolution is introduced into the ethics of hedonism. From pre-evolutionary hedonism to evolutionary hedonism is from a relatively empirical generalisation to a relatively scientific system.<sup>2</sup> To appreciate the nature of the change, let us recall the situation from which the hedonistic moralist sets out. He finds, we may say, a variety of impulses competing for satisfaction,—impulses varying all the way from the simple appetites of food and sex to the disinterested love of knowledge, of beauty, of moral perfection; and he has to show that these several impulses are nothing but so many varying quantities of the impulse toward pleasure. Now when a hedonist of Mill's type was asked to justify his position, he replied by offering an empirical analysis of the conditions of pleasure and pain and an

<sup>1</sup> See Martineau's account of the significance of evolutionary theory, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book II, Branch I, ch. ii, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. iv; Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, pp. 82 ff., 366 ff. For a criticism of scientific hedonism, and, indeed, of 'scientific' ethics in general, see Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book II, ch. vi; see also his treatment of Spencer in his last book, published posthumously, on Green, Spencer, and Martineau.

empirical estimate of the probable results of conduct. When he claimed that ethical judgments were judgments of pleasure and pain, he meant that these judgments embodied the results of a long series of observations made by men in general upon the tendencies of different kinds of conduct; in the case of honesty, for example, men had from time immemorial noted the respective effects of honest and dishonest conduct, and upon the basis of their observation had set up honesty as a safe general rule. When he then urged that happiness be made a practical working principle he meant that, in cases where the calculation had not already been made, each should make it for himself. This argument rendered the theory immediately open to criticism.<sup>1</sup> It was claimed at once that the calculation was beyond human capacity; for, it was said, the elements involved in such a calculation—for that matter those involved in a single choice between honesty and dishonesty—are far too numerous and complicated to be brought together in any single process of thought. Moreover, since there had never been any general agreement with regard to the exact nature of pleasure and pain, there had never been any basis either for calculation or for trustworthy observation.

Such were the difficulties of a purely empirical hedonism. The evolutionary hedonist meets these difficulties by taking the equation of pleasure and duty outside of the field of empirical calculation and into that of natural law. He recognises the vagueness of our conceptions of pleasure and pain, the enormous complexity of the elements involved in the calculation, and the unreliable character of observations based upon the state of our feelings. Accordingly, for the *feeling* of pleasure or pain he substitutes the correlative *physiological condition*, and for the *calculation* of pleasures he substitutes the *law* of biological evolution. The identity of pleasure and duty is then shown to be a necessary product of race development. But he

<sup>1</sup> Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England* (ed. 1862), pp. 223 ff.; Spencer, *Social Statics*, Introduction; *Data of Ethics*, ch. iv.



does not stop here. The law of moral evolution is to be translated not only into a biological law but ultimately into a law of physics. The evolution of conduct is ultimately nothing more than a particular phase of that tendency toward adjustment and equilibrium which governs the redistribution of matter and motion in the material world as a whole.<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is one of the aspects of the law of gravitation. Granting, then, that his substitutions are correct, it is evident that the equation of pleasure and duty no longer rests upon the uncertain process of empirical generalisation. It is now a necessary correlate of established natural law.

In the remaining sections of the chapter we shall examine the evolutionary argument more in detail. This will require the separate consideration, first of the relation between pleasure and self-preservation, then of the exact meaning of self-preservation, and finally of the law of conformity to environment.

## 2. SELF-PRESERVATION AND PLEASURE

The evolutionary hedonist accepts the definition which makes 'pleasure' equivalent to the satisfaction of sense, and carries the process of definition a step farther, reducing all forms of sense-pleasure, and hence of pleasure generally, to the one form represented in the enjoyment of health and the preservation of life. This first step in the evolutionary argument rests upon the empirical observation<sup>2</sup> that in general pleasant objects

<sup>1</sup> Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 74 (Appleton, 1893).

<sup>2</sup> For an understanding of the real basis of the evolutionary argument, the empirical character of our information regarding the identity of pleasure and health should be carefully noted. It is mistakenly assumed, on the basis of an argument first advanced by Spencer (*Psychology*, § 125), that such identity is a necessary result of natural selection. It is said that if men enjoyed suffocation and starvation, and found the exercise of reproductive and nutritive functions highly painful, they would not continue to exist. But the argument assumes what hedonism sets out to prove, namely, that men always aim at the greatest pleasure. Apart from this assumption it is conceivable that men should find a delicious pleasure in starvation and yet not choose it, or that they should find nutritious food highly nauseating and yet eat it. It should be added that

are those that tend to preserve life, while painful objects are those that tend to destroy life. It is commonly recognised that objects pleasant to the taste are generally wholesome food, while those that are unpleasant are generally unwholesome or poisonous. Similarly, pleasant odours, such as the odour of new-mown hay, or of the pine woods, or of the sea air, are generally either wholesome in themselves or indications of the presence of some other wholesome object ; while foul odours, such as arise from insufficient ventilation, or from decaying animal matter, are generally poisonous. Pleasant sounds have a soothing or, as the case may be, a bracing effect upon the nerves, while unpleasant sounds are conducive to headache and exhaustion. For sensitive persons there is a marked relation between bodily comfort and pleasant or unpleasant shades and tints. Again, a comfortable bodily temperature is a sign of health, while fever or chill is a sign either of the approach of disease or of the unhealthfulness of one's immediate surroundings. And pleasant activities, whether of the body as a whole or of individual organs, are those adjusted to the demands of health, while painful activities are those which are too weak or too intense. To this general rule there are some apparent exceptions, such as the pleasure of alcoholic intoxication and the unpleasantness of certain medicines. But, according to the evolutionary hedonist, these exceptions are not real. For if to the pleasure of intoxication and the unpleasantness of physic we add their after-effects, we find that the experience on the whole is pleasant or unpleasant in proportion as the objects are on the whole healthful or unhealthful.<sup>1</sup> Such is the experience upon which Mr. Spencer formulates the principle that pleasures are the correlates of activities that preserve life, while pains are the corre-

Spencer's main argument for the correspondence of pleasure and health is the empirical one. See his *Psychology*, Vol. II, Part II, ch. ix.

<sup>1</sup> We must note, however, that, though Mr. Spencer makes pleasure and health generally correlative under present conditions, the correspondence will not be complete until the final stage of evolution.

lates of those that are injurious to life. This is also expressed by saying that pleasures are the correlates of healthful activity, pains the correlates of disease ; or, again, to use more distinctly evolutionary terms, pleasures are the 'requisites for survival.'

Having established this correspondence, the hedonist conceives of the several forms of life and activity as simply more or less efficient methods for the preservation of life. And upon this basis he proceeds to explain our notions with regard to their relative value. Thus he assigns to human life in general a value superior to that of the lower animals — not because, as we commonly think, human life is intrinsically superior, but because, being the same in kind and quality, it promises a greater permanence. For the same reason he conceives civilisation to be superior to barbarism. This does not mean, of course, that the lower animals are shorter-lived than men, or that savages are shorter-lived than civilised men, but rather that the higher races have a greater capacity for survival and ultimate permanency ; in the struggle for existence the advantage lies on the side of men as compared with animals, on the side of the higher civilisation as compared with the lower. It is this which also constitutes the superiority of the higher moral and cultural activities within the more civilised life. The value of science and education lies in their practical contribution to the improvement of safety and health. The value of art lies in the relaxation afforded from the strain of constant attention to realities. The value of truth and honour consists in the fact that these virtues are elementary conditions of that process of intelligent coöperation which distinguishes men from animals ; but the sole advantage of coöperation is that it gives to human life the greater possibility of permanency. The value of chastity (*i.e.* the observance of determinate sexual relations) lies partly in the fact of its affording immunity from disease, but chiefly in the advantages which it affords for the care of offspring and the consequent survival of the species. Thus all the objects of our common-sense valuation owe their

value to their conduciveness to health and life. This is the final and sole meaning of morality; in their last analysis the moral rules are nothing but the best rules for preserving life and insuring the survival of the species.

The foregoing will give us a general idea of the way in which the hedonistic ethics is translated into the language of evolution. We have still to ask how it is that the conditions for survival come to be embodied in the rules of morality. This question will occupy us in the last section of the chapter. In the meantime we have to look more closely at the conception of survival, or self-preservation.

### 3. THE MEANING OF SELF-PRESERVATION

In the last chapter the various aspects of hedonistic theory were referred to its underlying method of quantitative comparison. This method is not abandoned with the introduction of the conception of evolution. The evolutionary theory is not less a mathematical theory. It means only that, instead of measuring the quantity of pleasure directly, we now measure it by the quantity of life. What, then, is our criterion for the *quantity* of life?

When 'preservation of life' is set up as the end of conduct, we naturally assume that what is meant is lengthening of life or the maintenance of human life at its greatest possible length. Clearly this is the only meaning which the phrase ordinarily conveys. And it is still more directly implied in the equivalent phrase, 'self-preservation.' Length of life is also the common measure of bodily health. When we say that a man is in the best of health, we mean that his organism is in a high state of efficiency—not necessarily for artistic creation or scientific investigation, or even for the transaction of business—but simply for a maximum continuance of life. We mean, in short, that he is a good risk for a life-insurance company. This is what we mean, again, by 'vitality.' 'A great amount of vitality' is a capacity for long endurance of the conditions

of life. And when we speak of 'survival' it would seem that any other measure of life but that of length were clearly excluded. Thus the whole vocabulary of evolutionary hedonism (not to speak of the use made of its vocabulary) points to length as the measure of the value of life.

Mr. Spencer, however, is unwilling to estimate life by length alone. He holds that the quantity of life is to be measured also by its 'breadth.' An oyster, enclosed in a safe and comfortable shell, may live longer than a cuttlefish, but the 'sum of his vital activities' is far less. "The difference between the average lengths of the lives of the savage and the civilised is no true measure of the difference between the totalities of their two lives, considered as aggregates of thought, feeling, and action. Hence, estimating life by multiplying its length into its breadth, we must say that the augmentation of it which accompanies evolution of conduct results from increase of both factors. The more multiplied and varied adjustments of acts to ends, by which the more developed creature from hour to hour fulfils the more numerous requirements, severally add to the activities that are carried on abreast, and severally help to make greater the period through which such simultaneous activities endure."<sup>1</sup>

Now it is no doubt in accordance with popular usage to speak of 'breadth of life,' 'breadth' of interests, 'breadth' of activity in general. But the popular conception of 'breadth' is not in any true sense a conception of quantity. For 'breadth of life' there are two possible meanings. It may be applied, in the first place, to the expenditure of physiological energy. In this case we should measure the quantity of a life by the amount of physical work accomplished during that life, and we should measure the work accomplished as it is measured by the physicist, by multiplying the amount of force developed into the time through which it is exercised. This would mean, then, that a man who led a physically active

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, ch. ii.

life would develop a greater quantity of life than one who was physically inactive; or, so far as we conceive mental life to involve the expenditure of nervous energy, the greater quantity of life might be developed by the individual who was more active mentally. In both cases, however, what we have in mind is the expenditure of physiological, and ultimately physical, energy. But if this be our conception of breadth, then breadth, as a criterion applied to the measurement of life, is not really a different criterion from that of length alone. The analogy between length and breadth and time and force is misleading, for while any length of time through which a movement endures may be associated with any amount of force, the length and breadth of life are mutually interdependent. A human life is not like a quantity of energy of which the less that is expended at any one point the longer will be the duration of expenditure. On the contrary, if anything, the man who can put forth the greater energy at any point will live the longer life. When we say of a man that he is stronger than another, we mean both that he is capable of doing more work in his lifetime and that he is likely to live longer; and when we undertake to regulate our actions so as to accomplish the greatest amount of work in our lifetime as a whole, what we have in mind is a mode of action which will extend our activities over the greatest possible length of time. Accordingly, if by quantity of life we mean the amount of physical energy developed or the amount of physical work done, all the requirements of breadth of life are fully included in the requirement of length alone.

But this is not what we commonly mean by 'breadth of life.' When we speak of one form of existence as being broader than another, we use 'breadth' in its second possible meaning in which it refers not to *amount* but to *variety* and *complexity* of activity. And this is evidently what Mr. Spencer means by 'the more multiplied and varied adjustments of acts to ends.' But, of course, breadth of life is not *mere*



variety and complexity. We do not conceive a life to be broader merely because one's energies are more scattered; nor, again, because being scattered, their mutual relations are more complicated and more difficult of statement. A broader life, in the popular and desirable sense, is a life so organised as to contain more of what is humanly interesting. But (assuming that we have rejected length of life as a sole criterion) we have no quantitative conception for the measure of what is interesting. The term 'breadth' is a mere metaphor. Multiplying the length of a life into its breadth is like multiplying the height of a building by its architectural beauty. It is multiplying a number of years into an interesting quality, a quantity into something which is not a quantity. This is evidently an impossible mathematical operation.

Mr. Spencer's conception of length and breadth may then be regarded as simply the evolutionary translation of Mill's criterion of quantity and quality. And the difficulties are in both cases the same. If breadth of life represents an end distinct from length of life, it may happen that the demands of length and breadth will prove mutually contradictory; in this case it will be possible at best to make one criterion absolute while the other remains subordinate, to be considered only after the first is fully satisfied. But if breadth is after all nothing but the quality which conduces to greater length of life,—if, as Mr. Spencer seems to hold, "the more multiplied and varied adjustments of acts to ends" do nothing but "help to make greater the period through which such simultaneous activities endure"—then, either the double criterion is meaningless, breadth being already included in length, or it prejudges the whole question at issue. For the relation of length to breadth is just what constitutes the general ethical problem. We are confronted with an apparent incompatibility between a varied and interesting life and a long life, between a life devoted to ideal ends and the enjoyment of ease and animal contentment. We have then to decide which is better,—to vegetate

like an oyster, or to indulge in the more interesting activities of the higher animals? To live a long life or an ideally perfect life? To state at the beginning of our investigation that the two are identical is to prejudice the whole question at issue.

We must conclude, then, that the only criterion which a hedonist may consistently adopt for the measurement of the quantity of life is that of length. It must be remembered, however, that the criterion of length is applied not merely to the life of the individual, but to that of the species. The measurement of the morality of conduct in terms of preservation of life is like its measurement in terms of pleasure or happiness; in both cases it is a question of the maximum for the race as a whole.

#### 4. CONFORMITY TO ENVIRONMENT

We have now to study the process by which, according to evolutionary hedonism, the identity of pleasure and duty is effected. This process is of course nothing less than the evolutionary process as such; therefore it is here that we are to look for the main significance of the evolutionary-hedonistic theory of morals.

The theory with regard to the process rests upon a certain preliminary conception of the ethical and psychological facts. This is expressed by Mr. Spencer as the correspondence of inner and outer relations.<sup>1</sup> It is known to us more familiarly as the biological correspondence between the structure of the organism and the conditions of the environment. The outer relations are those existing between properties of external objects that are beneficial or injurious to the organism and others that accompany them and serve as signs of their presence. The inner relations are those existing in the mind between the impression which is produced by the external object, and which serves as a sign of health or danger, and the movement employed in securing or avoiding the object. In an animal of the lower

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, ch. vii; see also his *Psychology*, Vol. I, Part III.



order the relation existing in the outer world between, say, an odoriferous substance and its nutritive properties is paralleled in the organism by a relation between a sensation of smell and an impulse to secure the object. As the animal ascends in the scale the situation becomes more complex, and the correspondence between outer and inner more delicate. We have, then, on the inner side, instead of a simple odour followed directly by an attempt to secure the object, an exceedingly complex presentation of sounds, odours, colours, and the like (complicated with associations of past experience of pleasure and pain), which is followed by a complex set of movements determined in all its details by the complexity of the presentation. This inner relation corresponds to the outer relation between the complexity of properties in the object and the various beneficial and injurious effects to which they point. Thus it happens that a human being, instead of immediately devouring any object that offers an attractive odour and suggests an attractive taste, confines himself to those whose consumption is followed by beneficial results on the whole. The process of evolution is conceived, therefore, as a progress from a partial to a complete adjustment to environment, from a choice of the immediately beneficial and an avoidance of the immediately injurious to a choice of the greatest benefit on the whole, from simple to highly complex forms of desire and activity. The highest stage of the process is shown in the development of our moral ideals; these represent the most complete and complex adjustment between man and environment, and the most comprehensive and accurate summation of the conditions of preserving life.

So much for the relation of correspondence. It does not yet follow, of course, that the correspondence between our attitude toward objects and their beneficial or injurious properties is a correspondence adjusted to the conditions of pleasure and pain; for it is conceivable that we should choose the beneficial and reject the injurious, though the latter were pleasant, the former unpleasant. The pleasure-pain statement of the corre-

spondence is secured through the relation already noted between pleasure and health. If we accept the view that pleasures are the correlates of activities that preserve life and pains the correlates of those that are injurious to life, the final result of the adjustment between man and environment is that human impulses as a whole represent an approximately correct valuation of the conditions of pleasure and pain. And since the most highly developed of these impulses are the moral impulses, as expressed in our judgments upon conduct, it follows that, of all our valuations of the conditions of pleasure and pain, these are the most comprehensive and accurate.

This will serve as a preliminary statement of the facts. We have now to ask how this correspondence is to be explained, — in other words, how it has been brought about. Mr. Spencer offers two forms of explanation, the particular features of which should at least be mentioned, though we shall not be able to enter into any satisfactory discussion of them. The correspondence is attributed on the one hand to the direct action of environment (direct equilibration), on the other hand to the effects of natural selection. The first of these methods of explanation assumes, as the material out of which the organism is constructed, a relatively passive and plastic substance, capable of acting only in response to impressions received from external objects. As a result of contact with environment this relatively formless material is gradually moulded into shape, given a certain positive structure and certain positive tendencies. These tendencies are transmitted by each generation to the next and at the same time corrected by further contact with environment, so that, finally, the organism comes to be closely adjusted, in all its variety and complexity of structure and tendency, to the variety and complexity of environmental conditions. The second form of explanation (the theory of natural selection) takes it for granted that the organism will have to start with certain positive tendencies and a certain positive structure of its own. In other words, it assumes, as a basis for further

development, the presence of certain impulses, which may be beneficial or injurious. Contact with environment means, then, in this second case, that the tendencies which are ill adapted to the conditions of the environment, and which are therefore injurious to the organism, are gradually eliminated, leaving only those which are well adapted, hence beneficial and pleasant. The elimination comes about through the destruction of those individuals in whom the unfavourable characteristics predominate; in the struggle for existence they are less fitted to hold their own against those who are better equipped, and they are thus less likely to transmit their unfavourable tendencies to the following generation. The process of elimination begins, of course, with the characteristics that are most injurious; but it passes from these to the less injurious, until finally the only elements of the original impulses that survive are those which conform most nearly to the environment, and which therefore most contribute to self-preservation and happiness. The difference between the two forms of explanation amounts, then, to this: in the first, the original organic material is assumed to be absolutely plastic, like wax or molten iron, and the structure which is subsequently developed is a mere impress of the environmental moulds through which it passes; in the second form, all the peculiarities of structure and all the forms of activity which are at any time developed are assumed to have been originally inherent in the organic material itself, the environment effecting nothing more than the elimination of forms that are injurious. Mr. Spencer assigns the operation of natural selection chiefly to the lower stages of evolution, the direct action of environment chiefly to the higher stages.<sup>1</sup>

It would be impossible to offer any satisfactory discussion of Mr. Spencer's argument without unduly departing from our present subject. It may be suggested, however, that the presence in his system of two unrelated developmental processes is itself a sign of incoherence. And in a later chapter<sup>2</sup> it will

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Biology*, I, p. 468 (Appleton, 1892).

<sup>2</sup> Ch. vi.

be shown that the natural-selection argument involves assumptions which are generally inharmonious with the hedonistic point of view,—at least so far as it presupposes, as a basis for selection, certain inherent tendencies; for the essential doctrine of hedonism is that we have no original tendencies to activity, no original preferences of our own, but desire only to adjust ourselves comfortably to existing conditions. For the present, however, it is important to observe that, whatever inconsistencies may be inherent in the assumption of two forms of evolutionary process, both processes, as conceived by Mr. Spencer, are the expression of a single underlying motive. And this motive is the point of main significance for the hedonistic theory of evolution.

Assuming a certain correspondence between the organism and the environment, there are conceivably two ways by which the correspondence may have been brought about; either the organism has modified the environment to suit its own purposes, or the environment has compelled the organism to conform to its conditions. Now the latter is the view of hedonism. It is the view implied by Mr. Spencer in both forms of explanation. In attributing the correspondence to the direct action of environment, he assumes that the organism has no preferences of its own; in the natural-selection argument he assumes that, whatever preferences it may have had, they have at any rate been disregarded. In both cases the correspondence is due to the action of external forces. On the basis of natural selection it has been brought about through elimination; the organism has been made to fit its environment in the same manner as a blank key is made to fit a particular lock, by cutting out the parts that do not fit. On the basis of direct action it has been brought about through a positive creation of tendency caused by the environment and effected in the organism,—just as a magnet may be said to create a tendency when it converts another object into a magnet like itself. This is, then, the real significance, from the hedonistic standpoint, of the adjustment

between inner and outer relations and between organism and environment; in the process of adjustment it is the organism which is adjusted, while the environment remains fixed; it is the inner relations—our tastes and preferences—which are made to conform to the external conditions of realisation, not these conditions to our tastes and preferences. In short, in the process of evolution it is the environment which exercises the whole directing power; the environment determines not only what we shall obtain but what we shall desire, not only the conditions of moral effort but the moral ideals themselves.

With this we have answered the question as to *what* determines the course of evolution. But to appreciate the full significance of the hedonistic theory, we have still to ask how this process of determination takes place. In other words, what is the precise nature of the process by which the organism is made to conform to the environment? That our character and ideals are absolutely determined by external forces is a doctrine which our naïve common sense does not easily accept. It is easy enough to see that wax or molten iron must take the form of the mould in which it is compressed, or, again, that a key will not open a lock unless it be cut to fit. But as conscious beings, we appear to have a certain capacity for self-adjustment; when it becomes a question of passing through a maze of environmental conditions, we do not go blindly ahead until we stick, like the wrong key in a lock, but we cut ourselves to fit; and though we are, no doubt, like the wax, moulded by our environment, still it appears that we may to an extent choose the moulds into which we shall enter. Now the hedonistic moralists in general would no doubt agree with this common-sense way of stating our subjective experience. They would admit that, from the standpoint of the agent (the person whose character and ideals are being formed), it does not commonly seem to be a matter merely of external influence; it seems rather that, to an extent at least, we are able to control our character and destinies. But they would claim that

this is not the standpoint from which a true view of the situation is to be obtained. For a true view we must cease questioning our inner consciousness, and make an objective study of the physiological and physical conditions by which our consciousness is formed.

It is in this choice of standpoint that we arrive at the ultimate significance of the hedonistic theory of evolution. It is this objective method and point of view upon which it bases its claim to be a scientific theory. In our inner consciousness we seem to be self-active beings, not wholly at the mercy of our environment. But the consciousness of self-activity is an illusion. It means merely that, not being able to analyse all the circumstances that determine our actions and our views, we arrive at the false conclusion that we have determined them ourselves. And in view of the enormous complexity of the factors constituting our consciousness, it is perhaps inevitable that we should arrive at such false conclusions as long as we attempt to state the operations of consciousness through a study of consciousness itself. Accordingly, the evolutionary hedonist shifts his attention from the contents of consciousness to the physical and physiological conditions. Every conscious process is parallel to (not to say 'subordinate to') a physiological process. Every activity of thought is the correlate of an activity in the brain. But the brain, however related to consciousness, is still a physical body, subject to the same laws as other physical bodies. It follows, then, that every external circumstance, however unnoticed, will have its due effect in determining the brain structure, — just as every drop of a waterfall has its effect in the corrosion and in the shaping of the rock beneath. Every object that comes within the range of my sense-organs must, whether recognised in consciousness or not, set up an activity in the end-organ, which is transmitted by the nerves to the brain, and there effects a modification of the brain structure. The modification thus effected will then have its part in determining the course of my future conduct. Now this process



has been at work from the beginning of evolution. In each generation the structure of the brain has been modified by the environment of that generation, and the structure thus modified has been transmitted to posterity. Each modification means an increased conformity to environment, — a closer correspondence in the complexity and flexibility of brain structure to the complexity and variety of environmental conditions. It is therefore inevitable, from a scientific standpoint, that the brain, in its structures and activities, and, in terms of the correlative consciousness, the character, habits, and ideals of the agent, should now represent an approximately complete conformity to environmental conditions.<sup>1</sup>

We may see now on what ground the evolutionary hedonist may claim to have given a greater certainty to the equation of pleasure and duty. The accuracy of the equation is now due to the inevitable accuracy of the mechanical principle. A trustworthy accountant may easily make a mistake in adding a column of figures, but the speed register of an engine has its accuracy guaranteed by its mechanical relations to the shaft. So, again, the wisest man may err in his estimates of pleasure and pain and of the means by which they are obtained ; the factors are so numerous and complicated that he may easily overlook some of the more important of them. But the brain, as Mr. Spencer puts it,<sup>2</sup> is an 'organised register' of experience, and stands in mechanical relations to the external stimuli. It is thus, like the speed register, inevitably accurate, having duly recorded and weighed every occurrence within its own environment and that of its ancestors. It is true that the brain habits sometimes lead us astray, causing us to start out on lines that are at variance with those required by present conditions. But this is because the evolution of the brain is not yet complete ; we have not yet encountered all the possible

<sup>1</sup> The more direct effects of mechanical forces upon the brain, such as the effects of drugs and of gunshot wounds, are not considered here.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 470 (Appleton, 1892).

variations of experience. Taking, however, our more pronounced and definite tendencies, as represented in our more positive assertions of importance and value, and most distinctly in our judgments of right and wrong, it becomes mechanically inevitable, when we consider the conditions under which the structure of the brain has been evolved, that these tendencies should represent on the whole an accurate summation of the beneficial and injurious properties of external objects, and—translating ‘beneficial’ and ‘injurious’ into their pleasure-pain equivalents—of the conditions of pleasure and pain.

For an evolutionary treatment of ethics, see Spencer, *Principles of Ethics* (more especially Part I, *Data of Ethics*, which is printed separately, and which gives the best statement of evolutionary hedonism); Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*; Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*; Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*; Simmel, *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*.

For a history of evolutionary theories, see C. M. Williams, *A Review of the Systems of Ethics Founded on the Theory of Evolution*.



## CHAPTER V

### HEDONISTIC SOCIAL THEORY

#### 1. SOCIAL THEORY AND ETHICS

WE have now to study the application of hedonistic theory to social relations. It will be clear at the outset that such relations have a direct bearing upon the question of conduct. For, whether we wish it or not, we find ourselves living in the company of our fellow-men, with the result that our welfare is to some extent determined by their actions, while theirs, in turn, is determined by our own actions. There is nothing that a man can do which will not in some way affect his neighbours ; his mere presence in the world, involving, as it does, the occupation of a certain place as a dwelling and the consumption of a certain amount of food, has its effect in determining for others the place where they may dwell and the food that they may eat. Now it is recognized by all forms of ethical theory, as well as by common sense, that duty demands some attention to the welfare of society. The question arises then as to the motive and the extent of this aspect of duty. What motive has the individual for considering the welfare of society? And how far should he consider the welfare of society as distinct from his own welfare as an individual? This question, it will be seen, leads directly to the broader question of social relations in general : what are the motives or forces that determine the relations of men in society and make them work together for the common good? The reply of hedonism to these questions will be the subject of the present chapter.

## 2. THE HEDONISTIC MOTIVE FOR SOCIAL EFFORT

According to the later hedonists my immediate motive for considering the welfare of society is a feeling of sympathy with the aims of my fellow-men, — a feeling which is so much a part of my nature that I tend spontaneously to think of others as well as of myself. This feeling is, however, the result of social development and is not the original and real motive for social effort. The original (and still the real) motive is that of self-interest.<sup>1</sup> As an individual living in society I find that I cannot give unlimited extension to my own desires without coming into conflict with the interests of others; and since my strength as an individual is insufficient to overcome the united force of others, I find it necessary and advantageous to conciliate their favour by some regard for their interests. If I fail to do so, I may be crushed out of existence. And though I may be so strong as to have little reason to fear my neighbours, it is still desirable to be on good terms with them; for I may find myself at any time in need of their active assistance. No man is so well able to take care of himself that the need for assistance may not arise; and when it does arise, he cannot expect others to serve him unless he has shown a disposition to serve them.<sup>2</sup> This is the negative side of the social relation, to which there is also a positive side. To the advantage to be derived from the assistance of our fellows in

<sup>1</sup> See Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. iii, p. 46 (Longmans, 1891). It is difficult to get a perfectly clear statement of this point from the later hedonistic writers. In the passage referred to, Mill clearly stands for the reality of disinterested motives, yet, later in the same paragraph, he evidently thinks it safer to regard them as derivatives of self-interest, *i.e.* as due to a sense of the advantages to individuals of social organisation.

<sup>2</sup> "Dream not that men will move their little finger to serve you, unless their advantage in so doing be obvious to them. Men never did so, and never will, while human nature is made of its present materials. But they will desire to serve you, when by doing so they can serve themselves; and the occasions on which they can serve themselves by serving you are multitudinous." — BENTHAM, *Deontology*, Vol. II, p. 133.

time of trouble we may add the mutual advantage of coöperation in general. It is found that two men working harmoniously together can produce more than both can produce working separately, so that, if the product be equally divided, each will gain more for himself through coöperation with others than by working alone. As a result of countless experiences of this sort, extending throughout the history of the race, the necessity and desirability of coöperation and mutual self-sacrifice have come to be regarded as settled. Accordingly, there has been brought about in men in general a feeling of unity and sympathy with regard to their plans and purposes, so that now, instead of calculating our personal advantage in each case that calls for social effort, we tend to a large extent to give our services spontaneously. All the advantages of coöperation have by no means been yet worked out; therefore, we may expect, in the further development of social relations, to find an increased emphasis placed upon its desirability. It is to be remembered, however, that the motive which ultimately prompts a man to coöperate with others is that of private advantage; therefore he will not make the sacrifice necessary for coöperation further than his advantage will justify, or, in other words, further than his sacrifice will be made good to him with interest on the investment. And since it is not true that such investments are in every case remunerative, a hedonist will advise a man to exercise a certain amount of caution in his sacrifices for the good of society. For there is a point beyond which self-sacrifice no longer pays.

My duty to my neighbour is, accordingly, nothing but 'my own advantage rightly understood.' Hedonism assumes that the fundamental tendency of the individual is to consult his own advantage. But this may often be furthered by consulting the advantage of others. Therefore an intelligent person will give the interests of others their due consideration. It is thus the larger intelligence, as manifested in this way, which constitutes the real difference between the unselfish and the

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selfish man. Both alike are determined in their actions by the motive of self-interest. But the unselfish man recognises the power of others to do him good or ill ; he therefore makes due sacrifices to conciliate their favour, and in the end finds himself the gainer.<sup>1</sup>

It is this principle which, according to hedonism, underlies our common-sense conceptions of social morality. We must remember that, while the hedonist does not accept the common rules of morality without some reservation, he is nevertheless at pains to show that they support his theory of conduct. The hedonistic attitude is neatly illustrated in the expression, "Honesty is the best policy." Theoretically there are many cases where a calculation of self-interest would show that strict honesty is not the best policy. Practically, however, the hedonist believes it better to adopt the rule of honesty as an approximately invariable rule, not attempting to calculate the advantages of honesty or dishonesty except in extreme cases. For the proposition that honesty is the best policy is the outcome of long experience and of a calculation many times repeated and confirmed, — the calculation of a whole race of beings each working for his individual advantage. It is abstractly possible that a case where I seem to find self-interest on the side of dishonesty may constitute a contingency not yet considered in the race calculation. But the balance of probability is against it ; and not only the balance of prob-

<sup>1</sup> "For though a man's happiness is naturally and necessarily his primary and ultimate object, yet that happiness is so dependent on the conduct of others toward him, as to make the regulation and direction of the conduct of others toward him an object of his prudential care." — *Deontology*, Vol. II, p. 35.

See also Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, chs. xi-xiv, inclusive. Note that, while Spencer endeavours to place egoism and altruism on a footing of equal authority and originality, there is nevertheless a tendency to make egoism the prior motive, and, indeed, the ultimate basis of altruism.

"Here, then, is a proposition which, I think, may be regarded as certain, that 'tis only from the selfishness and confin'd generosity of man, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin." — HUME, *Human Nature*, Book III, Part II, § ii.

ability, but the experience of most of those who have sought to establish their own interest in defiance of the general rule. The result of nearly all such experience is to confirm the statement that honesty is the best policy.

### 3. THE CONCEPTION OF SELF-INTEREST

So much for a general statement. It is now our duty to inquire more carefully into the meaning of self-interest, and the consequent meaning of the proposition that self-interest is the basis of my duty to my neighbour. Now if self-interest is to mean anything, it must refer to interests which are exclusively my own, and which as such are distinct from, and possibly opposed to, the interests of my neighbours; otherwise, the term does not distinguish one object of choice from any other. We have here the same situation to deal with, and the same error to avoid, as was noted in our definition of 'happiness.'<sup>1</sup> In both cases our popular thought tends to give the term such indefinite extension as to deprive it of all its meaning. Thus, we may hear, the miser loves his gold, the lover his mistress, the mother her child, and the philanthropist his fellow-men; and since all these desires are the expression of the interests of the agent they must ultimately be equally and indistinguishably self-seeking; hence, it is argued, a man never acts and never can act except in obedience to self-interest. But the result of this argument is to deprive 'self-interest' of all its meaning; for if all desires are equally and indistinguishably desires for my own interest, it is clear that in working for my own interest I do not work for one object rather than another. Accordingly, this is not the conception of self-interest which belongs to a scientific hedonism. Among the many objects that I may desire, or the many desires that I may have, the hedonist first distinguishes certain desires as the expression of self-interest, all the others as the expression of interest in others. And when he afterward asserts that all our desires are ultimately

<sup>1</sup> p. 40.

the expression of self-interest, he does not by any means abolish the original distinction ; he means merely that, with the distinction in mind, we may interpret the other desires as modifications or compounds of the desire originally defined as self-interest.

This limitation is presupposed in the hedonistic method of quantitative comparison ; for, without a fixed standard or unit which shall remain constantly the same, a calculation of self-interest would be out of the question. When I lend a man money upon sufficient security, to be repaid with interest, the nature of the transaction, and the advisability of it, is perfectly clear. For since the value given and the value to be received are both expressed in dollars and cents, the two may be easily compared, and the nature of the balance, whether it be profit or loss, may be accurately determined. I may thus easily find out whether it will pay to lend the money. But to lend money with no expectation of a return in kind, and to look for my reward in the receiver's gratitude, or in the good opinion of my neighbours, or in the consciousness of having helped a fellow-being in distress, is a transaction whose advisability is, *prima facie* at least, uncertain. To balance gratitude against a certain amount of money is like balancing apples against pears. Three apples is neither more nor less than two pears, and a given expression of gratitude is neither more nor less than a given amount of money. In the terms in which they stand they are incommensurable. A quantitative comparison of the two requires, then, that they be reduced to common terms.

If they are to be compared in terms of self-interest, I must begin by distinguishing self-interest from other kinds of interest. Supposing that we identify the sacrifice of self-interest with the financial sacrifice, it is then conceivable that gratitude and the like, though not immediately capable of expression in terms of money, may yet yield us ultimately a return in money value, that is, a return in money or the material commodities and conditions which it costs money to secure. It is conceivable, for example, that the general feeling of self-



satisfaction which I may derive from my neighbour's expressions of gratitude, or even from the consciousness of having exercised my power in his favour, may have a better effect upon my health than the same amount of money spent in travel and recreation ; or that the reputation for benevolence which I thus acquire may, by rendering my neighbours more ready to deal with me and to give me the opportunity of joining them in profitable enterprises, ultimately do more toward increasing my fortune than if the money expended had been put to interest. Looking at the matter in this way, the amount of self-interest at stake becomes a calculable quantity, and the return of self-interest acquires a definite meaning ; it now means a return of more of the same kind.

Now the only objects which represent self-interest *as distinguished from the interests of others* are those which give sensuous pleasure, or more particularly, those which contribute to health, wealth, material welfare, and animal contentment. Individual and opposing interests are due to the fact that the individuals as such are represented by animal bodies,<sup>1</sup> each occupying a certain portion of space and requiring the appropriation of a certain quantity of material goods, the existing quantity of which is never sufficient to satisfy all or perhaps any of the individuals. Thus it is clear that Peter and Paul cannot eat the same beefsteak. Each may eat a different portion of what, for convenience, we call the same steak, and there may be more than enough for both. But there is never enough for all who would eat beefsteak, and therefore every portion that either of them eats amounts to depriving some other consumer. Whatever a man consumes in the way of material goods and conditions means a deprivation for some one else. The bed in which he sleeps, the chair in which he sits, the house in which he lives, and the seat which he occupies at the opera, are all possessed by him at the expense of another. And granting that he has a sufficient amount of

7 Abs. 3.  
, e.g. pleasure.  
or animal.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xii, 1.

beefsteak, he still lacks a sufficiency of other things that he would like to possess, some of which might have been purchased with the amount spent for his neighbour's portion of steak. Or granting that the opera-house will hold more persons than would care to hear the opera, even with free admission, still it is possible that any one of those present would prefer, like Ludwig of Bavaria, to have the others excluded and hear the opera alone. There would appear to be no ultimate limits to the conceivable demands for material goods on the part of even a single individual. However rich he may be, it remains always possible that his material satisfaction may be increased by the appropriation of something belonging to another.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, it is the demand for the possession of material goods, for the appropriation of material conditions to our exclusive use—in other words, for sensuous enjoyment—which creates the distinction and opposition of individual interests. Where exclusive appropriation is not our object, there is no distinction between self-interest and the interests of others. If I am interested in founding a public institution and have no interest in having my name attached to it, my own interest in the matter becomes indistinguishable from the interests of all others concerned. Or if I am interested in the welfare of a friend, without regard to the recognition he may accord to my efforts, and without wishing to enjoy any superiority as benefactor, the interests of both are again identical and indistinguishable. In every case self-interest has reference to the appropriation of something which it may cost another to give; and such appropriation means always in its last analysis an appropriation of material goods and conditions.

This conception of self-interest is not only a logical necessity, but represents the common-sense understanding of the conception as expressed in the term 'selfishness.' At first sight it would

<sup>1</sup> Unlimited individual demand and extremely limited supply are important factors in the hedonistic system. See Hume's reference to nature's 'scanty provision' in note on p. 80.



appear that many desires are selfish which are not material. For example, the love of fame is commonly accounted a selfish desire; yet, we may ask, has it any reference to the portion of material goods? A careful examination will show us that it has. For in the love of fame we distinguish the desire for the exclusive enjoyment of a certain product of the object from the desire for the object as such. If I am interested in the solution of a scientific problem, I shall be quite satisfied when the solution is found and published, and, though the author of the solution, I shall still be quite satisfied if the results are published anonymously. But clearly this will not satisfy a love of fame. For fame demands that my name be publicly attached to the discovery. If any one else makes the discovery and publishes it at the same time, my fame is diminished, *i.e.* it is not always spoken of as *my* discovery, but sometimes as his. In other words, all the expressions of popular admiration with regard to the discovery are not now turned in my direction. And this means finally that I do not enjoy the exclusive possession of certain material conditions. The same is true of other selfish desires. A selfish love for a friend means that I wish all my friend's attention and activity to be directed exclusively toward myself. A mother's selfish love for her child means that she wishes to enjoy all his caresses. If she is unselfishly interested in the child's welfare, it will be a matter of indifference upon whom the caresses are bestowed. Or if she desires not merely his welfare but his confidence, sympathy, and respect, she might receive all of these without preventing him from taking a similar attitude toward many others. But the essential feature of a selfish love is that it demands not merely confidence and sympathy but a monopoly of attention and service. Thus all the demands of self-interest come to have the same character as the self-interest expressed in the desire for food: they all require the exclusive benefit of certain material conditions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay vii.

With this definition before us, we may see what is meant by the hedonist when he declares that all of our interest in others is ultimately the outcome of self-interest. According to hedonism, we are never interested in others for their own sake, or in any object for its own sake. All of our actions are directed toward the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure. When the mother loves her child, it means that she craves the enjoyment of parental emotion,—an emotion which is made up partly of sexual elements and partly of other sensuous elements; and the child is the object through whose activity the emotion is stimulated.<sup>1</sup> The lover's affection for his mistress is ultimately of the same nature, though immediately he may not recognise its sensuous character. And the same is true of the philanthropist's love for his fellow-men. Their recognition of his efforts arouses in him a certain glow of pleasant feeling. His heart beats more firmly, his blood flows more quickly, and he has a generally heightened sense of elasticity and power. In short, he obtains through the good will of others, or even (in its absence) from a sense of his own superior merit, the same sort of organic stimulation, though in a milder degree, that he obtains from wine. He may not be aware that this result of his benevolence constitutes his motive; nevertheless he would find that if the exercise of benevolence ceased to be sensuously stimulating, it would at the same time cease to be interesting.

#### 4. SELF-INTEREST AND THE GREATEST HAPPINESS ON THE WHOLE

Self-interest is thus shown to be an interest in sensuous enjoyment; but, as we have seen, the love of pleasure is also a desire for sensuous enjoyment; hence it follows that the love of pleasure is identical with the love of self. In other words, hedonism in its last analysis is identical with egoism, and egoism

<sup>1</sup> See James Mill, *Analysis of the Human Mind* (ed. 1878), Vol. II, p. 224; also Bain's note on p. 230.

with hedonism. Lest we be accused here of an artificial and illegitimate deduction, it will be well to note that the same result is reached through an analysis of the conception of pleasure. For the desire for pleasure is very clearly a desire to enjoy,<sup>1</sup>—to make the feeling in question a part of one's own life and consciousness. It is one thing to desire to enjoy pleasure, but quite another to desire the existence of pleasure in the consciousness of some one else. The former is a clearly interested demand for feeling, the latter a relatively disinterested demand for an abstract result. It is the former which the hedonist has in mind when he appeals to the universal desire for happiness and to the inconceivability of desiring an object except for the happiness it would produce. This also is the interpretation of hedonistic theory which makes its fundamental assumption so obvious and its system as a whole so popular and convincing. But to those who hold that happiness is the only conceivable object of desire, it is just as inconceivable that a man should desire any happiness but his own as that he should desire an object which promised no happiness whatever. For this reason the more rigorous and consequent of the hedonistic school, though urging men to work for the happiness of men in general, have always felt the necessity of translating the general happiness into terms of the individual's enjoyment, and of showing that by increasing the happiness of men in general he obtained to a corresponding degree an increase of his own happiness.

If we carefully examine what is meant by the happiness of men in general, we shall find that when 'happiness in general' is defined on the basis of happiness alone (the only basis allowable within the limits of hedonism) its demands may be shown to be entirely consistent with the demands of the hedonist's 'self-interest,' and, indeed, necessarily implied in them. The difficulty of connecting self-interest and the general happiness lies in the looseness with which the latter is usually defined.

<sup>1</sup> This is denied by Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*, pp. 334 ff.

The most common expression of it is 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' It must be immediately clear, however, that in 'greatest happiness' and 'greatest number' we have quantities that may vary in opposite directions; for it is possible that the sum of happiness will be greater in absolute amount when its distribution is limited. And as a matter of fact we find that the individual capacities for enjoyment show wide variations. Some men require a large quantity of the world's goods to make them happy or even comfortable, while others are relatively content with a little. If, then, goods and services are to be distributed with a view purely to a *maximum* of happiness, we shall have to disregard the extent to which our goods are distributed, and consider only the several individual capacities for enjoyment. In short, we must distribute our goods and services where they will be most productive. And we may find men with so little capacity for enjoyment, as compared with that of others, that it will not pay to consider them at all. It is clear, then, that a regard for happiness alone would not involve any consideration of 'the greatest number.' On the other hand, 'the greatest number' introduces an element for which there is no basis in the theory of hedonism. It amounts really to a demand that "everybody is to count for one and nobody for more than one." Accordingly, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' is nothing but the maximum of happiness consistent with equal distribution. But evidently the equality of distribution has no relation to the maximum of happiness as such. When we come to Kant we shall see that the equality of rights rests upon a theory of human nature totally at variance with that of hedonism. Equal consideration presupposes that men as such are 'rational beings,' and that, as rational beings, each is to be regarded as an end in himself, and none is to be treated as subordinate or inferior to another. Hedonism teaches that men are not 'rational beings,' but products of their environment, and that, therefore, I owe no one more consideration

than his capacities demand. It appears, then, that in 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' we have a combination of mutually contradictory conceptions.

If, then, we disregard the demands of equality and universality and consider those of happiness alone, we shall find that, on the basis of the hedonistic theory of human motives, it must inevitably follow that the necessities of self-interest are identical with those of the maximum of happiness as such. We have to remember that in the hedonistic person the sole impelling force is the desire for pleasure. It must therefore follow that the individual's search for pleasure will be energetic and vigorous in proportion as his desire for pleasure is strong, and his desire will be strong in proportion as his capacity for enjoyment is large. Hence, the amount of pleasure that he will obtain will be proportioned to his capacity for enjoyment. The total distribution will thus fulfil the conditions necessary for the maximum of happiness.<sup>1</sup>

It may be objected that the satisfaction of desire is not necessarily proportioned to its strength; that, in order to attain this result, the individual's abilities must be equal to the strength of his desires. But upon reflection it will be clear that this equality is provided for in the hedonistic system. For according to hedonism, the pleasure-impulse is the sole determinant, not of desire only, but of all the various aspects of our mental development. As such it constitutes the sole stimulus to intellectual effort and intellectual development. Therefore it will follow that, in the long run, those who have the greater capacity for enjoyment and the greater desire for pleasure will be intellectually more active and in every way more capable of dealing

<sup>1</sup> "Every man is nearer to himself, and dearer to himself, than he can be to any other man; and no other man can weigh for him his pains and pleasures. Himself must necessarily be his own first concern. His interest must, to himself, be the primary interest; nor, on examination, will this position be found unfriendly to virtue and happiness; for how should the happiness of all be obtained to the greatest extent, but by the obtainment of every one for himself, of the greatest possible portion?" — *Deontology*, Vol. I, p. 18.

effectively with the conditions of obtaining happiness. If I do not make my way through the crowd and displace my neighbour in the attainment of happiness, it proves that my zest for enjoyment, and hence my capacity for happiness, is less than his, and that, therefore, according to the rule of the maximum of happiness, the object should go to him. This does not mean, of course, that the maximum is to be obtained by an indiscriminate indulgence in brute force. To make the most effective use of my powers I have to estimate the amount of force that will be opposed to me, and the direction in which it is likely to be applied ; and a too violent exercise of force in a given direction may be not only useless but destructive. What it means is that when I have had a trial of strength with my neighbour, and each has discovered how far he is able to hold the other in check, the resulting situation, where each is exerting his maximum amount of effort and resistance, constitutes a distribution of goods which fulfils exactly the requirements of a maximum of happiness on the whole.<sup>1</sup>

This view of the situation is the expression not only of the necessities of hedonism as a scientific theory but of the hedonistic element in popular thought. It represents an attitude quite common among the moneyed classes. A person whose income enables him to live at leisure often justifies his privilege by reference to his finer sensibilities and the more exacting necessities of his life. He makes a larger demand upon the supply of happiness and has a greater appreciation of the value of happiness than his simpler neighbours, and therefore it is but natural and proper (on the basis of happiness) that he should have a greater supply of goods. If we ask him what he has done to deserve his privilege, he will tell us that in turning

<sup>1</sup> It must be carefully noted that the identity of self-interest with the maximum of happiness on the whole does not necessarily involve the identity of happiness with duty, or with social welfare. The present argument shows merely the inner coherence of the hedonistic system. How far that system represents the common-sense view of morals is another question.



money into his private pocket he has accumulated capital for the use of commerce; in the hands of a person with less capacity for accumulation this capital would have been dissipated and lost to public use. If his fortune is inherited, he may still claim that by merely keeping his capital together he serves a public purpose, which would so far have remained unfulfilled if the wealth had fallen into the hands of a more shiftless person. In any case the possession of property represents not only a larger power of appropriation but a larger sense of the value of things,—a sense of value which is not possessed to the same degree by those who dissipate their property or who fail to accumulate. A similar view is common in commercial life. When a man falls into bankruptcy he no doubt excites the compassion and sympathy of his fellow-merchants; but their sympathy is largely modified by the philosophic view that the fact that the man was unable to hold his own proved that he was incapable of managing his business in a profitable way and of playing a useful part in the world of commerce. He was unsuccessful because he was unable to contribute sufficiently to human happiness to secure the recognition of other men; therefore he deserved to fail.<sup>1</sup> This is the attitude of hedonists generally toward the question of desert. A man always gets exactly what he deserves, for what he gets represents exactly the amount he has been able to contribute to the sum of human happiness.

##### 5. THE HEDONISTIC SOCIETY

The hedonistic system of social relations is thus at the same time an individualism and a collectivism. By these terms I distinguish it from the idealistic social system, to be presented in a later chapter,<sup>2</sup> which conceives of society as an organism,—an organic unity of functions such as is found in the relations

<sup>1</sup> This is the notion of desert implied in the phrase 'survival of the fittest.' See also Spencer's *Social Statics*, particularly his criticism of the poor-laws.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xii.



existing between the different organs of the human body. For the hedonist, society is not a harmony of functions, but an aggregate of parts or independent units. 'Society' is simply the sum total of the individuals composing it. Each individual makes a practically unlimited demand for enjoyment. Each, if left to himself, would absorb the whole quantity of human goods. Accordingly, when several individuals come together, the result is necessarily a conflict of interests. And since no one is able to drive all competitors from the field, the final outcome of the conflict is a compromise. The nature of the compromise will be determined, then, by the intensity with which each presses his claim, — in other words, by the relative capacities for enjoyment. Now this view of the social situation is presupposed in both the individualistic and collectivistic<sup>1</sup> theories of social forces and social welfare. Both conceive of society as a mere aggregate of individuals. Both assume that the interests of individuals are primarily in conflict, and that the result of the conflict must be a compromise. And both admit that the conflict must be settled by a trial of strength. If there be any difference between them it is this: the individualist demands that each man be left free to fight his own battles and to take the consequences; the collectivist proposes to unite the majority interest against the minority.<sup>2</sup> But the result will be ultimately in both cases the same, for the man of large demands will find it advisable to join the stronger party, while, on the other hand, the latter will find it to its advantage to enlist the services of the more capable and to disencumber itself of the incapable. Individualism is usually, therefore, the attitude of a privileged minority, while collectivism represents the attitude of a dissatisfied majority. Both

<sup>1</sup> As currently used this term has a wide range of meaning. It will be noticed that I restrict it to its etymological sense, *i.e.* collectivism regards society as a 'collection' of units.

<sup>2</sup> "Property [individualism] is the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Communism [collectivism] is the exploitation of the strong by the weak." PROUDHON, *What is Property?* tr. Tucker, p. 261.

attitudes mean that the social situation has not reached a state of final adjustment ; and both sides rest their claims for consideration in the final adjustment upon the same hedonistic grounds, — namely, the extent of their demands for happiness and the strength which they are able to exert in enforcing them.<sup>1</sup>

The hedonistic theory of society may be expressed, finally, in the conception of a composition or resolution of forces. Imagine a ball rolling on a billiard table. As long as it remains alone it will continue to move (leaving out of consideration the limits of the table, the resistance of the air, etc.) uninterruptedly in its initial direction. But when it meets another ball there arises a conflict, which alters the amount and direction of motion of each member. The subsequent action of each is then the mechanical resultant of the direction and force of its original movement compounded with the direction and force of the movement of the other ball. And if several balls are brought together, their movements and final positions are determined each by the resultant of its own force and those exerted by the others. The extent to which each is forced out of its way is determined, then, by the force with which it comes into the conflict compounded with the sum total of opposing forces. Now hedonism conceives of the relation between individuals in society in exactly this manner. The individual left to himself makes unlimited demands for satisfaction, and he will yield to nothing but the opposing force of another individual. Society means primarily the collision of a number of individuals, which later resolves itself into a state of adjustment, or social equilibrium. The place which any individual holds in the final adjustment is a resultant of the force with which he has entered the conflict and of those which were opposed to him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example (a hedonist might say) capitalists are individualists, trade-unionists are collectivists; both tend to claim all they can get and to justify their claims by their power of enforcing them.

<sup>2</sup> That the properties of a mass are dependent upon the attributes of its component parts, we see throughout nature. In the chemical combination of

The literature on the subject is practically coextensive with the list appended to ch. iii. Particular reference may be made to Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, chs. viii, xi-xiv, inclusive; Spencer, *Social Statics*; Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*; Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, Book III; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter on Justice; Hobbes, *De Corpore Politico* and *Leviathan*.

one element with another, Dalton has shown us that the affinity is between atom and atom. What we call the weight of a body is the sum of the gravitative tendencies of its separate particles. The strength of a bar of metal is the total effect of an indefinite number of molecular adhesions. And the power of the magnet is the cumulative result of the polarity of its independent corpuscles. After the same manner, every social phenomenon must have its origin in some property of the individual. And just as the attractions and affinities which are latent in separate atoms become visible when those atoms are approximated, so the forces which are dormant in the isolated man are rendered active by juxtaposition with his fellows. —SPENCER, *Social Statics* (Appleton, 1888), p. 29.

## CHAPTER VI

### HEDONISM AS A SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY

#### 1. THE HEDONISTIC STANDPOINT AND METHOD

THE hedonistic system of philosophy is the logical outcome of a special standpoint and method. The hedonistic *standpoint* is that of external observation as distinguished from that of introspection. In undertaking a description of human conduct we have a choice between two points of view, that of the agent, or that of the external observer of his action. If we adopt the first, we offer an analysis of our feeling of activity ; if the second, a description of overt action. The same difference of standpoint appears when we undertake to state the distinction between right and wrong conduct ; we may consult our own sense of right and wrong, or, by observation of the actions of others, record the preferences which men in general actually make. The hedonist takes the latter course. His description of conduct is directed primarily not to the motives of action but to action itself, and his definition of right conduct rests primarily not upon the verdict of conscience but upon an observation of preferences actually made. As a result of this standpoint the actions of the lowest animals (if not the movements of inanimate objects) may become more truly significant of the real nature of human action than any expression of internal feeling, however clear and decisive the latter may be. In referring hedonistic theory to this standpoint, I do not claim, however, that hedonists in general make an avowed or exclusive use of

it, but merely that it is the point of view which, whether consciously or unconsciously, underlies their general attitude and enables us to give a consistent formulation of the various aspects of their theory.

The hedonistic *method* of definition, and criterion of reality, is that of physical science ; that is to say, the hedonist undertakes to explain the different aspects of reality as quantitative variations of a homogeneous substance. When an object of any kind comes under our observation, there are two questions that we may ask about it : first, What is it made of ? secondly, What does it do ? Either may indicate what is in our opinion the essential thing to be known about the object ; either may tell us what the object *really* is as distinct from what it appears to be on first sight. The first, when examined more closely, comes to mean, What are the parts or the elements of which it is constituted ? and, further, from a historical standpoint, What is the raw material from which it was originally made ? The final meaning of the second question is, What does it accomplish ? or, What purpose does it fulfil ? Either question may be presupposed in our common judgments about things, and both are presupposed in scientific investigation, according as the nature of the subject-matter renders one or the other immediately more available. The same man, who as a physicist or chemist explains the peculiarities of objects by the relations between the atoms composing them, may as a zoölogist explain the peculiarity of an organ by the function or purpose which it fulfils. But science in the strict sense presupposes ultimately the exclusive use of the first category, that, namely, which expresses reality in terms of elements and their quantitative relations ; so that a zoölogist who, from motives of present convenience, adopts the purposive or functional method of inquiry, nevertheless looks forward to a higher stage of biological science in which it will be possible to explain all the peculiarities of living creatures in terms of quantitative relations between homogeneous material elements.

It will be evident that this choice of method is a necessary corollary of the hedonistic standpoint. For the purposes of human action (if we assume it to be purposive) are not revealed to the external observer. The agent himself is conscious of what he means to do, but other persons are acquainted only with his overt acts. They may, indeed, discover in his actions the evidence of a purpose, but in that case their interpretation proceeds from the standpoint of their own sense of motive and activity as agents. Accordingly, a rigorously consistent hedonist would not pretend to attribute human activity to motives or purposes. He may no doubt use the language of purpose, since this is often the only language in which the details of conduct can conveniently be described; but while 'speaking with the vulgar' he is 'thinking with the learned'; though speaking of pleasure as an end or motive, he thinks of it merely as a force governing human action, or as the material of which human nature is composed.

## 2. THE HEDONISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

From this choice of standpoint and method we have a system of psychology. The hedonistic psychology is that of the associational school. According to this school the mind is a series of mental states, of *quasi* mental pictures, which (*a*) are various combinations of simple, homogeneous mental elements, whose form of combination is (*b*) determined by the order of external stimuli. According to the 'law of association' things that coexist tend to cohere. Mental states or elements which have originally appeared together become so related that if one of them reappears in consciousness it tends to bring the others with it; and since the original coexistence was due to a coexistence of external stimuli, the order of mental states tends to copy the external order of events. The original substance of mind is thus wholly amorphous and indeterminate, like the surface of a blank waxen tablet, and mental structure

is the mechanical result of the impressions left by external objects.

The association theory may be regarded first as a theory of cognition. The question to be answered by a theory of cognition is, How do I know (as of course I do know) that everything must have a cause and an effect, and that particular things are due to particular causes and produce particular effects? The associationist answers the question by referring to the external conditions under which the conception of cause has arisen. This conception is, to begin with, not a simple mental state, but one composed of innumerable elements in highly intricate relations. The relations are those found in the external order of events. It is observed, for example, that iron sinks, wood floats, etc., and the relations observed between iron and sinking, and wood and floating, tend through association to become so fixed in the mind that the thought of one brings with it the thought of the other. But we discover that iron does not invariably sink nor does wood invariably float, since iron ships float, while wooden ones sometimes sink. These subsequent observations then have the effect of modifying the original association of ideas. The thought of iron does not now bring with it always the thought of sinking, but rather a particular modification of the idea of iron is associated with sinking, another modification with floating. Now the causal conception is simply the composite result of the whole mass of such experiences. The external fact of orderly succession has produced in the mind a fixed expectation of order, — an expectation so fixed that any conception but that of order has become *a priori* impossible. But while the complex of events has gradually built up the general expectation of order, it has at the same time defined with ever increasing exactness the particular nature of the order. The final result, then, is to bring about, in the complex of mental elements, a set of associative relations which is an approximately exact copy of the external order of events.



-The development of will (including desire and impulse), and of moral sentiment and character, is a similarly composite result. On first sight human impulses show an enormous variety; and *prima facie* any impulse would appear to be as real and as elementary as any other. But for associational psychology there is no way of explaining this variety, except as quantitative variations of a single elementary, and hence real, desire — which is then described as a desire for pleasure. Now this elementary desire constitutes not merely the material of which desires are at present composed but that out of which they have been historically constructed. Accordingly, in his search for the elementary impulse, the hedonist directs his attention backward. He then finds that the young infant has apparently no desires except the sensuous ones, and from this he concludes that the elementary desire is the desire for food and animal enjoyment. But, according to the evolutionary conception, the development of desire does not begin with the individual infant, nor yet with the species; its earliest stages must be sought among the lower animals. Turning his attention then still farther backward, the hedonist finds that the desires of the lower animals are still more distinctly sensuous. Sensuous desire then becomes his type or element of desire. This choice of element is to be traced also to the hedonistic standpoint. Subjectively there would appear to be no ground for the claim that sensuous desires are more elementary than the other forms. Just how the desires of an infant are subjectively estimated we of course do not know; but to the grown man the really vital and fundamental thing seems often to be his business or profession rather than his dinner, and in his family life the purely sexual element is often the least important. This is usually conceded by psychologists of the associational school. What they claim is not that food and sex are the important objects in subjective valuation but rather that for the real basis of our preferences we are not to consult our subjective valuation, but rather to record the overt acts of living beings. In

any case the stream cannot rise above its source ; and the stuff of which we are made must be the same as that which constitutes the nature of the lowest animals.

The development of impulse from simple to complex then follows the law of association. The burnt child dreads the fire because fire is associated with memories of burnt fingers ; he loves his mother because the thought of her suggests all manner of comforts of which she is the source ; originally she is the source of his food. Simple associations of this character are then strengthened and modified by further experience, until the final product appears in a highly complex aggregate of moral and æsthetic valuations, which then constitutes an approximately faithful estimate of the opportunities for enjoyment afforded by external objects. In this complex state we appear often to value the objects of desire for their own sake, to discover intrinsic worth in filial affections, intrinsic meanness in ingratitude. In other words, the desires for such objects appear to be elementary and original. But this simplicity and originality is wholly illusory. The moral impulses are as purely the result of association as the child's dread of the fire ; they differ from the latter merely in their greater complexity, which is due to the greater extent of experience upon which they rest. The vast extent of this antecedent experience is a point upon which the associationist places special emphasis. When doubt is expressed as to the possibility of transforming, through the mere force of association, sensuous impulses into reverence for ideals or selfish impulses into those which are disinterested, the associationist points always to the length of time through which the process of association has been taking place ; nothing is impossible for association if the process be sufficiently extended.

Since moral valuation is the result of external conditions, it follows that the hedonist is a believer in determinism as opposed to free will. Just what is meant by free will is not always clear. According to the more usual interpretation, it means that action

is not determined in any way, — neither by mechanical conditions nor by conscious estimates of value ; according to Kant and his school, it means that action is determined by ‘reason,’ that is, by conscious estimates of value, but not by mechanical conditions ; in the latter definition it is assumed that irrational actions are due to the blind forces of habit and association. On either definition it is clear that the hedonist is a determinist ; for he believes that all activity, including that which follows apparently upon consciousness and foresight as well as that which is apparently blind and mechanical, is ultimately the inevitable outcome of external mechanical conditions. This position is also a logical consequence of the standpoint of external observation ; for, viewed externally, the actions of men are nothing but the effects of external stimuli ; like the actions of physical objects they are resultants of physical conditions. It is only from the inner standpoint of feeling that they seem to be an original product of self-activity. And it is to be noted in this connection that, in our naïve judgments about freedom, we are inclined to claim freedom for our own acts while asserting the acts of others to be determined. It may further be mentioned that, while moralists of other schools call themselves sometimes determinists and sometimes libertarians, a hedonist is almost invariably an avowed determinist.

### 3. THE HEDONISTIC BIOLOGY

Psychology and biology are confronted with parallel forms of problem ; both have to determine how far the life-process under consideration is an active expression of the nature of the organism and how far it is the passive result of environmental conditions. But in the last analysis it is not a mere parallelism which renders the biological problem of interest to psychologists and moralists, but rather an identity. Since the introduction of evolutionary conceptions into psychology and ethics, the all-important question has been that of origin and development. The individual comes into the world with certain instincts

already formed ; the question is, Where did they come from? A few years ago, even after the introduction of the evolution-hypothesis, it was commonly assumed that, while inherited instincts are numerous in the lower animals, they are relatively few in men ; that what animals do by instinct is with men the result of association and experience. Professor James has shown, however, that, if anything, the human instincts are more numerous than those of animals, — so numerous, indeed, as to render it probable that most human actions are thus specifically provided for. This being the case, it is evident that a theory of human activity becomes very largely a theory of the origin of instincts ; and since the origin of most instincts was antecedent to the development of a distinctly human species, the question takes us out of the field of psychology as such into the wider field of biology.

The biological problem may be introduced by the question, Are acquired characteristics inherited? This is answered affirmatively by one school of biologists, commonly known as the school of Lamarck, negatively by the school of Weismann. According to the former, every part of the human body contains formative material, that is, material which may be instrumental in forming not only the body in question but those of its progeny. Any modification which occurs in the parent body may then, through a modification of the formative material present in the part modified, be communicated to the offspring ; any modification due to environmental conditions may consequently be inherited. According to the Weismann school the formative material and the body material (described respectively as *germ plasm* and *somatoplasm*) are totally distinct ; a modification of the individual body will therefore have no effect upon those of the progeny. The formative or germ plasm passes from the parent body and forms the body of the offspring without in any way sharing the vicissitudes of either. According to this view, evolution is a matter of natural selection. The possibilities of the germ plasm are indefinite. If

the environmental conditions were similarly indefinite, any of these possibilities might appear as actual characteristics of the animal type in question. But as a matter of fact the environmental conditions are definite and limited ; and as such they exercise a restrictive effect upon the development of the possibilities contained in the germ plasm, so that only those are actually realised which are able to satisfy the conditions imposed by environment. So far, then, the distinction between the two views amounts to this : according to one, the environment may initiate a modification (*i.e.* create an instinct) ; according to the other, it can merely restrict the operation of instincts already inherent in the organism.

But the vital point of the controversy lies deeper. It has to do not only with the inheritance of *acquired* characteristics, but with what is implied as to the mode of development of *all* characteristics. The question resolves itself ultimately into this : which is primarily and fundamentally responsible for the course of human and animal development, the environment or the inherent nature of the organism ? Now the Lamarckian places the burden of responsibility upon the environment. In other words, it is his object to show that all the characteristics of human and animal life are due entirely to environmental influences ; that these influences are not limited to the creation of primitive forms of instinct, nor yet to the subsequent modification of primitive forms, but are constantly active in the creation of new forms both of structure and functional activity. Accordingly, whatever stability and continuity of character our human life may show is due entirely to a constancy of environmental conditions.

The Weismann point of view, on the other hand, in claiming that no acquired characteristics are inherited, necessarily implies that all inherited characters have been present in the organism, at least in the structure of the germ plasm, from the beginning of evolution.<sup>1</sup> This implication is openly expressed in Weis-

<sup>1</sup> For convenience I assume that evolution begins with the origin of multicellular organisms. I leave out of account the modifications of the Weismann

mann's theory of the absolute stability and continuity of the germ plasm, in which it is held that the elements of the germ plasm have been wholly undisturbed and unmodified since the origin of life. Now if the germ plasm is the vehicle of all the characters that are inherited, it follows that all the general and fundamental human characteristics (those which are exhibited by successive generations as distinct from those which are peculiar to individuals) have been present in the germ plasm since the beginning of evolution. Each of them was specifically provided for in the original constitution of the germ plasm; none of them has been created or in any way modified by any circumstances that have occurred later. Accordingly, the Weismann point of view places the burden of responsibility for the character of human life upon the original constitution of the organism. Through the process of selection the environment has, of course, eliminated many of the original constituents, but it has never created a single positive character.

If we accept this interpretation of the biological controversy, it will not be difficult to see that the hedonistic moralist is definitely committed to one side of the controversy—the Lamarckian side—and opposed to the other. In a later chapter I shall endeavour to show that the idealistic theory is similarly committed to the Weismann view. For the present we have to note that the assumption of inherent tendencies of any degree of stability and continuity is wholly contrary to the spirit of hedonism. From the hedonistic standpoint the fundamental characteristic of human nature is its tendency toward passive conformity. There are no specific impulses to satisfy, no specific ends to be accomplished; our only object is to make ourselves as comfortable as possible in view of the

view involved in the distinction of unicellular and multicellular. Moreover, since our main interest in the Weismann view is its character as the expression of a thought tendency, I have disregarded the later modifications of his theory, which, as it seems to me, tend to obscure the original point at issue. For a statement of Weismann's view see his work on *The Germ Plasm* (tr. Parker and Rönfeldt); also Romanes, *An Examination of Weismannism*.



existing conditions; and provided we are comfortable, it matters not what kind of a life we lead. This view of the matter is implied also in the popular notion of 'pleasure,' or 'happiness.' To the naïve mind the most distinct characteristic of happiness is contentment. The happy man is the contented man, and the 'pleasure-loving' person is the one who drifts with the current of circumstances. The life which is pleasant on the whole is that which is relatively easy, comfortable, and free from care,—that in which there is the least element of struggle with adverse conditions. The scientific exponent of hedonism simply elaborates the popular conception, converting the easy and comfortable life into a life which conforms to the conditions of the environment, and assuming, as a basis for the duty of seeking ease and comfort, that passive conformity is the fundamental characteristic of human nature.

Now in making a concrete application of his theory, the hedonist has to face the fact—or what seems to be a fact—that, in many of our activities, we ignore all considerations of ease and comfort, and bend our energies toward the attainment of some special end,—that, instead of conforming to the environment, we set out to make the environment conform to us. This is especially evident in the case of our more pronounced instinctive activities. In the operation of sexual instinct, using the term in its wider significance, there is no thought of the conditions of ease and comfort. A man who is genuinely in love hardly pauses to estimate the material comforts of attaining his desired object; rather he demands the object for its own sake without regard to its cost. This is the characteristic also of the more distinctively moral impulses. The demand for honour and justice is apparently a blind impulse, so far as any thought of material convenience is concerned; it is enough that the objects themselves be realised.

How, then, is the hedonist to treat such impulses? What theory may he hold with regard to their origin? Biological



theory suggests two possibilities: they may be the reflection of previous environmental conditions, or the expression of tendencies which have been inherent in the organism (unalterably stable, unbrokenly continuous in the germ plasm) since the beginning of life. It is evident that, if the latter alternative be accepted, the hedonist gives up his case. For the fundamental characteristic of human nature is then no longer a passive conformity to the conditions of happiness; and conformity can, therefore, no longer be regarded as the substance of duty. So far as these special impulses are fundamental to our nature, the attainment of their several ends becomes a moral obligation, without regard to the attendant happiness. The germ-plasm theory is thus fundamentally opposed to the theory of hedonism. On the other hand, the Lamarckian view is just what is needed to complete the hedonistic system. For what the hedonist wishes to prove with regard to these specialised instincts is that the disregard of environmental conditions is after all only apparent, that in reality they are nothing but a larger and more complete conformity. For this purpose he requires a system of evolution which would guarantee this result. This system is furnished by the Lamarckian school of biology. The fundamental assumption of this school is that the organism is a relatively passive and plastic substance, having no inherent tendencies of its own, no permanent and stable forms of germ plasm, — in fact, no capacities whatever except the capacity for receiving impressions from the environment and suffering constant modifications through environmental changes. On the basis of this hypothesis it will inevitably follow that our tendencies are on the whole a faithful copy of environmental conditions and that, except in the case of tendencies incompletely formed, those which seem to run counter to these conditions represent in their last analysis nothing but a finer and more complete conformity.

## 4. THE HEDONISTIC COSMOLOGY

It appears, then, in tracing backward the development of moral consciousness, that a large part of the process was purely physiological, and, according to hedonistic theory, due to the action of physical forces upon the animal organism. Now it is the tendency of hedonistic and associational theory to extend this purely physiological interpretation to the whole course of human development, making it cover the later and more conscious stages of the process as well as the earlier and relatively unconscious. The hedonist tends, in other words, to ignore the presence of consciousness in the higher stages, to assign the real work in the process of development to the brain and nervous system, and to regard even the 'association of ideas' as a merely convenient formula for describing events which take place in the brain. This tendency is already implicit in the standpoint of external observation; for what we observe from this point of view is not the course of ideas but the reaction of the organism to external conditions. It is again implied in the view which makes the course of thought a copy of the series of external events. For, as all psychologists will admit, the state of consciousness at any moment is by no means an adequate representative of the whole external situation; of the innumerable possibilities of sensation contained in the environment at any particular moment only a few are represented in actual sensation; and it is clear that, if consciousness and idea are a necessary feature in mental development, a great part of the environment will fail to be represented, while, on the other hand, every physical stimulus which reaches the sense-organs *must*, whether represented in consciousness or not, be recorded in the nervous system and have an ultimate effect in determining the activity of the agent. Accordingly, the associational psychologist, though using the language of consciousness, finds it more satisfactory to locate the associational process in the brain; for it is there that all the real work is done. He prefers also, with

Spencer, to refer the identity of pleasure and duty to the operation of natural law rather than to a process of conscious calculation; for it is impossible to say how far the pleasant and painful qualities \*of objects will be noted by consciousness while the brain is an 'organised register' (to repeat Spencer's phrase) of all the conditions at any time present in the environment of the individual or of his ancestors.

From this position, which regards mind as a mere spectator in the process of development, it is but a step to that which affirms that consciousness as such has no real existence. The latter is what hedonism comes to stand for in its more extreme aspects. Already we have noticed that the hedonist, even while using the language of consciousness, thinks of consciousness as nothing more than (*a*) a blind tendency to seek the immediately pleasurable and shun the immediately painful, together with (*b*) a tendency to retain impressions in the order in which they are imprinted by the environment. Upon this basis consciousness has very little to do with shaping the destinies of the organism. It may exist as a fact in itself, but its activities are fully determined from outside. The physical forces are the real agents; it is they that pull the strings, press the buttons, determine the specific ideas to be thought of and the specific objects to be desired. It would seem, then, that in the interests of rationality and theoretical simplicity it would be well to revoke the original separateness and independence of the mental factor, and to make it a derivative of the physical world. And this is the attitude which hedonistic writers tend finally to take. Mr. Spencer, for example, though unwilling to be called a materialist, has given us an elaborate account of the development of consciousness out of a world which was originally purely material; he tells us that the rudimentary psychical act is not to be distinguished from a physical act, that sensations are composed of nervous shocks, and that consciousness is the product of a quick succession of changes in a ganglion. The same view appears in his assertion that the

biological, psychological, and sociological views of conduct are merely corollaries of the physical view. Mill also, though far from being an extreme hedonist, confesses that his psychology is materialistic, though not, as he adds, in the 'obnoxious' sense.

With this in mind we may outline a hedonistic cosmology, or history of the world as a whole. The hedonist returns in imagination to a time when there was no consciousness and no life in the world, nothing but a countless number of simple, homogeneous atoms moving blindly about in accordance with the law of gravitation. Concentrations of such atoms into relatively compact groups resulted in the formation of the solar system. Within these groups certain relatively simple combinations of atoms have formed, through the differences in their manner of combination, the different chemical and physical substances; more complex relations of atoms are represented in the phenomena of life; and still more complex relations in the phenomena of consciousness. The evolutionary process, one might say then, has advanced from a complete homogeneity to a heterogeneity, from a state in which nothing exists but simple atoms to one which exhibits such differences as those found between the various kinds of material objects and between inanimate objects and living beings. But these differences are after all unimportant; they do not touch the real substance of things. In reality the human being is composed of the same material as a worm, a tree, a stone, a steam engine; and the real principle of activity is in all these objects the same. And in reality there has been no progress whatever. The world is, in short, nothing but what it ever was, — an aggregate of atoms acting according to the law of gravitation. The real man is, therefore, not the conscious, purposive being that he feels himself to be, but merely an aggregate of atoms, — an aggregate whose inner relations are, indeed, more difficult to comprehend than those of simpler physical and chemical substances, but whose material and principle of action is not

different in kind. Since, then, the conception of a personality acting according to a sense of value and constituting a factor distinct from the force of gravitation is a mere illusion, it is useless to devote ourselves to its special cultivation. The real object of life (so far as we may speak of an object of life from this extreme standpoint) is, crudely speaking, to conform to the law of gravitation, — that is, to study the physical laws which determine our existence and to live in accordance with them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following passages from eighteenth-century literature illustrate the philosophical attitude of the hedonist. The attentive reader will detect the same philosophical motive in Spencer, expressed, of course, in more modern terms.

"Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of cause and effect, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think; every effort we can make to throw off our subjection will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire; but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. The principle of *utility* recognises this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law."—BENTHAM, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, opening paragraph.

"If we receive at our birth only wants, in these wants and in our first desires we must seek the origin of the artificial passions, which can be nothing more than the unfolding of the faculty of sensation. Perhaps both in the moral and natural world, God originally implanted only one principle in all he created, and that what is and what is to be is only the necessary unfolding of this principle. He said to Matter, 'I endow thee with power.' Immediately the elements subject to the laws of motion, but wandering and confused in the deserts of space, formed a thousand monstrous assemblages, and produced a thousand different chaoses till they at last placed themselves in that equilibrium and natural order in which the Universe is now supposed to be arranged. He seems to have said to Man, 'I endow thee with sensation, the blind instrument of my will, that, being incapable of penetrating into the depths of my views, thou mayst accomplish all my designs. I place thee under the guardianship of pleasure and pain: both shall watch over thy thoughts and thy actions: they shall produce thy passions, excite thy friendship, thy tenderness, thine aversion, thy rage: they shall kindle thy desires, thy fears, thy hopes: they shall take off the veil of truth: they shall plunge thee into error, and, after having made thee conceive a thousand absurd and different systems of morality and government, shall some day discover to thee the simple principles on the unfolding of which depends the order and happiness of the moral world.'" — HELVETIUS, *De l'Esprit*, Essay III, ch. ix, English translation, p. 248.

The hedonistic theory may then be regarded as a mechanical view of conduct. The ethical theory implies immediately a mechanical psychology, which attributes all the phenomena of conscious life to combinations of simple mental elements; more remotely, a mechanical biology which translates the mental elements into physiological elements and the law of association into a biological law; and finally, a mechanical cosmology which reduces all the reality of the world to simple physical elements governed by one physical law.

On the hedonistic standpoint and method, see Wundt, *Ethics*, Part III, ch. i, 2, d; Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, pp. 359 ff.

For an illustration of the method, see Jevons, *Political Economy*, chs. i, ii, iii.

On the hedonistic psychology, see James Mill, *Analysis of the Human Mind*, particularly Vol. II, chs. xxi, xxii, xxiii; Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*; Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. vii (showing the special application of evolutionary-associational theory to ethics); Ziehen, *Introduction to Physiological Psychology*, ch. ix (a very clear and straightforward statement of association theory revealing its physiological background); Gay, *Concerning Virtue and Morality* (in Selby-Bigge's *British Moralists*).

On the hedonistic biology read Romanes, *Examination of Weismannism*; Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, Part III, chs. viii-xiv; *First Principles*, Part II.

On the hedonistic cosmology, see Huxley's essays on *Evolution and Ethics*; Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. v; Lange, *History of Materialism*, Second Book, Second Section, ch. iii.



## CHAPTER VII

### HEDONISM AND COMMON SENSE

#### 1. THE COMMON-SENSE SCALE OF VALUES

HAVING completed the theoretical formulation of hedonism, we shall now undertake a criticism of the hedonistic view from the standpoint of common sense. For this purpose we require, first of all, as a basis for examination, a description of the common-sense standard, or scale of values. Any complete and systematic description is of course out of the question. If there were any complete agreement with regard to the details of morality, there would have been no problem to begin with. But in the absence of a complete agreement there is always a certain community of point of view from which the moral problem may be formulated, and the claims of opposing theories examined and weighed. We shall therefore confine our description of the common-sense standpoint to those features with regard to which we may assume a general agreement in the moral consciousness of to-day.

For common sense of to-day moral valuations imply relative distinctions of better and worse rather than absolute distinctions of good and bad. A few years ago it was customary to think of moral conduct as a conformity to certain definite rules, such as those of honesty, justice, and chastity. On this basis men and acts, character and conduct, were classified into absolutely good or bad, according as they exhibited a conformity to the rules in question. But the entrance of evolutionary conceptions into the field of thought has had the effect, here as elsewhere, of translating hard and fast distinctions into those



that are purely relative. When we think of moral character as a growth, whose beginnings are lost in the uncertain regions of the beginnings of life, and whose completion is still far beyond the limits of definite foresight, it becomes impossible to think of goodness as a quality which arises suddenly at a particular point in the process, and which applies then without further distinction to all its subsequent phases, or of badness as a quality which belongs without distinction of degree to all forms of character and conduct which have not reached that point. Rather must we think of goodness or badness in terms of the *direction* which moral growth takes, a good man being one who, as compared with a bad man, stands higher in the scale of moral evolution. It appears also, upon examination of the individual virtues, or moral rules, that the distinctions contained in them are, after all, not absolute. Honesty, for example, is clearly a matter of degree. There is a grade of honesty which confines itself to the fulfilment of legal obligations, a higher grade which recognises all obligations expressly incurred, and a still higher grade which recognises obligation without regard to express stipulation. Again, there is an honesty which practises only those deceptions allowed by the conventional code, an honesty which refuses to commit any overt act of deception, and finally, an honesty which refuses even to acquiesce in a simple concealment, — which demands, for example, that, as the seller of an article, one not only refrain from misrepresentation, but see that the buyer be fully and accurately informed of its quality and value. A man who fulfils any of these requirements is to a degree honest, but a man who falls short of the highest is also to a degree dishonest. There are also degrees of chastity, from a chastity with regard to deed to a chastity of speech and thought. We may say, then, that, for the common sense of our time, morality is a matter of degree ; men and acts are not good and bad, but only better and worse, according as they stand higher or lower in the scale of moral evolution.

Now the scale of moral evolution is identical with the scale of evolution in general. By this it is meant that the development of moral consciousness is coördinate and ultimately identical with that of intellect and æsthetic appreciation. A sharp distinction is sometimes drawn between moral character, on the one side, and intellectual brilliancy, or æsthetic appreciation, on the other. It is said that a man may be of a high order of intellect and yet a rogue, and all the more dangerous a rogue because of his intellectual power; also that a man may have a fine sense of beauty with no sense of moral obligation. But these distinctions are now fast disappearing both from psychology and common sense. If you will carefully study the character and thought of those with whom you are brought into intimate contact, you will find that, generally speaking, a fine sense of honour is not to be found in a person who is intellectually dull, and, conversely, that one who is incapable of appreciating the finer moral distinctions is also incapable of comprehending the finer distinctions in the field of thought. For that matter, bluntness of any kind is incompatible with a really high order of intellect. It will be found, also, that one who is deficient in moral sense is likely to be correspondingly deficient in sense of beauty. And it is fair to say that, in the case of those poets who have been conspicuously deficient in moral sense, it is just this lack of moral earnestness which prevents them from attaining the best grade of artistic result. And, finally, a person whose æsthetic perceptions are coarse is not capable of appreciating the finer aspects of morality.

Psychologically these contrasts between intellectual, æsthetic, and moral are the expression of a now obsolete view which divided the mind into separate compartments of intellect, feeling, and will. The more modern view is that the mind in its development develops as a whole, and in its activity acts always as a whole. Consequently there cannot be a development in one direction which is not at the same time a development in all directions. Ethically these contrasts were the outcome of

a narrow sectarian morality which regarded intellectual activity as an attack upon divine truth and beauty as a sinful luxury. But in our present broader standpoint such contrasts have no place ; it is now difficult to conceive of any kind of value — moral, logical, economic, æsthetic — which is not ultimately a value for the cultural process as a whole.

Turning now to the concrete aspects of moral growth, the contrast between higher and lower may perhaps be most easily stated in terms of ideal aspirations and material necessities. The lower and more elementary phases of moral activity are concerned chiefly with the necessities of life. The satisfaction of these needs takes up a large part of our commercial, industrial, and domestic activities. The higher moral life is an endeavour to extend our activities beyond the satisfaction of mere necessities, and to attain a complete and perfect development of our human nature ; this means, on the one hand, a development of the more spiritual qualities, including, of course, intellectual insight and artistic appreciation, on the other a development of social sympathy. The lower impulses are those, therefore, which are confined to the mere preservation of life, while the higher aim at its completion and perfection. This is the distinction made by Spencer between ‘length and breadth of life,’ and by Mill between ‘quantity and quality of pleasure.’ Generally speaking, the lower impulses represent a passive acquiescence in the conditions of existence, a love of ease and contentment, a following of the line of least resistance, while the higher impulses show an active effort toward the attainment of specific ideal ends.

Since, however, the distinction between higher and lower is merely relative, it follows that the distinction between material necessities and ideal aspirations is also relative. The necessities of existence are by no means the same for the civilised and the savage, or for the higher and lower forms of civilised life. A civilised man perishes under conditions in which the savage survives ; and one who is accustomed to the niceties of

food, the means of cleanliness, light, and ventilation, and, in general, to the improved sanitary conditions, which are to be found among the well-to-do, will find it difficult to accommodate himself to the conditions of existence which prevail among the very poor ; the difficulty may be so great as to constitute a serious menace to health and life. Yet under their own conditions the very poor manage to exist and to maintain a certain grade of cultural activity, looking upon the improved conditions as ideal rather than necessary, or, to the extent that the latter lie wholly outside of their point of view, as mere luxuries. It is to be noted, however, that what may be a luxury from the lower standpoint becomes, nevertheless, a necessity from the higher ; for example, the conditions of food and lodging which enable the common labourer to perform his daily task would be utterly incompatible with the more varied and intense activities which take place upon a higher intellectual level. Material necessities and ideal aspirations are consequently relative to the stage of culture from which the distinction is made. If we think of the course of evolution as a straight line, the individual moral standpoints will be situated at different points along the line ; for each standpoint there is a certain region within which the moral conflict occurs ; and for each there is a point which marks off material necessities from ideal aspirations ; one direction along the line is the direction of necessities, the opposite is the direction of ideals.

For purposes of concrete description we may conveniently distinguish three grades of moral life. The lowest is a purely animal morality which studies only the conditions of animal ease and contentment ; the highest, which may be called a spiritual morality, represents a strenuous endeavour toward a perfect form of existence. Between the two there lies what we may call a common household morality, which, as against an animal morality, is marked chiefly by the virtues of industry, thrift, and common commercial honesty, but, in contrast to the spiritual morality, regards any higher effort as uncalled for.

The last represents the standpoint of much the larger number of men. At first sight this classification might appear to rest upon the conventional distinction of social classes. But though there is necessarily a partial correspondence between moral and social distinctions, inasmuch as those who stand higher in the conventional scale have fewer temptations toward the grosser forms of immorality, and at the same time greater opportunities for enlightenment, yet the two are on the whole far from coincident; and in any case the conventional social classification furnishes a very insecure basis for moral valuation. The several moral grades are intended, however, to represent the several grades of culture.

So much for the common-sense point of view. Now it is to be noted that within this point of view there are variations of emphasis and interpretation. The hedonist, while assenting to the general distinction between animal and spiritual ends, and yielding to the latter a generally higher value, would be careful to point out that only the former have an original and real value. Spiritual aims are of importance only as means to improved material conditions. He would tend consequently to lay somewhat less emphasis upon the strenuous pursuit of spiritual ends than the idealist, to whom (as we shall see more fully later) they are of prime importance. The idealist, on the other hand, would lay somewhat less emphasis upon the animal necessities.

## 2. HEDONISM AND THE COMMON-SENSE SCALE

We may now proceed to examine the theory of hedonism. How far is it true that the moral and cultural scale is simply a quantitatively ascending scale of happiness? In other words, how far is it true that the higher moral activities are simply improved methods for the maintenance of physical health, material welfare, sensuous enjoyment, animal contentment?

In our discussion of this question it will be convenient to distinguish between the positive assertion of hedonism, to the effect

that the higher morality marks an increase of material welfare, and the negative assertion, to the effect that it has no other meaning. The positive side may be quickly disposed of by admitting it. For in the present day it will hardly be doubted that higher morality includes an improvement in material conditions. In contrasting the middle grade of morality with the lower, this aspect is immediately obvious; there can be no question that common honesty, industry, and thrift stand for an advance in material welfare. In the higher grades the correspondence is less obvious, yet reflection will show it to be none the less a fact. For, as we have seen, a higher sense of moral and æsthetic fitness includes generally an advancement in intellectual capacity; and though the objects of higher intellectual effort be not directly material, yet there can be no doubt that every advance in intellectual power will result eventually in improved material conditions. These higher qualities do not necessarily improve the condition of the individual who possesses them; from a material standpoint they may be to his disadvantage; but they will in any case be of ultimate advantage to his community.

From our present-day standpoint it is inconceivable that there should be any general advance in culture which should not be an improvement in physical conditions. Every advance in culture involves increased demands upon the physical organism; and these demands must be met by a more adequate organisation of physical conditions, — for example, by an improvement in the quality of the food supply and by an increase in its security — so as to leave the attention free for the consideration of other objects. The development of a high type of culture is not possible where animal existence is itself insecure. The best types of intellectual activity, and the finer expressions of art, presuppose a condition of relative leisure, that is, a condition of relative freedom from the cares imposed by the struggle for existence. The same is true of the specifically moral qualities. A fine sense of honour implies a nicety and



justness of discrimination, a delicacy of appreciation, which is impossible under conditions where men are constantly engaged in the struggle for mere existence. This relation between physical and moral welfare is clearly recognised in the moral consciousness of our time. Moral worth no longer demands the mortification of the flesh. On the contrary, physical health is now regarded as an important aid to moral growth.

The negative assertion of hedonism, to the effect that spiritual values are *nothing more* than larger material values (using these terms in their concrete significance) is in my opinion without justification. The argument commonly advanced for it is inconclusive. As opposed to the older form of intuitional theory<sup>1</sup> which claimed that each of the moral activities had its independent value, it is certainly successful in showing that the value of each depends upon its particular function in the general economy of human nature, but it does not succeed in showing that the human economy is exclusively hedonistic. Hedonists tend to confound these two propositions,—to assume that if moral conduct can be shown to involve a co-ordination of activities toward an end, the end must necessarily be that of pleasure or material well-being.

Let us now look at some typical cases of the hedonistic argument.

(a) First, honesty is nothing but a method for maintaining and increasing material prosperity. The hedonist argues that men depend upon each other for their sustenance; that the sum total of wealth is increased by coöperation; that mutual confidence is, therefore, necessary to human existence and welfare. And so far the argument is undoubtedly valid. But its validity is not peculiar to the situation where the welfare in question is exclusively material; for it is clear that human purposes will be furthered by coöperation, whatever they may be. This would be just as true if the purposes were pain and self-destruction. Now in noting the different degrees of honesty

<sup>1</sup> Ch. ix.



we find that, while material well-being is everywhere more or less included in the object aimed at, and is no doubt distinctly emphasised in the more elementary stages, yet, in the higher stages, the emphasis is transferred from this aspect of the object to another which is now more important — that, namely, of personal sympathy. The higher degrees of honesty are shown chiefly in the more intimate and personal relations, in which we meet the more human side of life as distinct from the material or commercial side. In such relations, to the extent that they are personal and intimate, we look for confidence and frankness. We expect a business acquaintance to be on his guard, and to preserve a certain reticence (*e.g.*) with regard to the cost and market value of objects offered for sale; and we even allow a positive falsehood to pass without any feeling more pronounced than that of annoyance. But a falsehood from a friend is a distinctly personal injury. We expect more from him than from a mere acquaintance. His utility, if we may so term it, is not a matter of material utility only, as in the case of a servant or a business acquaintance. True friendship, no doubt, includes an offer of services when needed; but this is not the consideration emphasised; and it is not the object lost in a breach of faith. All other considerations are here lost to sight in the all-important fact that a breach of faith on the part of a friend is a sundering of personal relations, a vote of lack of confidence, a withdrawal of personal sympathy. In this we have the end or purpose which determines our high valuation of the sense of honour; among the several objects which give value to human life scarcely any is more important than that of sympathetic relations with our fellows; and the primary condition of sympathetic relations is mutual confidence.

A hedonist, while admitting that the relations which appear in our conscious valuation are substantially as I have described them, may nevertheless hold that the intrinsic value of sympathy is illusory. Personal sympathy is simply the most perfect form of coöperation; and since coöperation at its lower stages

was directed exclusively toward material well-being, since also the higher stages are nothing but modifications of the lower, it follows that the end of conduct is everywhere the same. Accordingly, the sense of personal injury which follows a betrayal of friendship is after all nothing but a vague sense of material loss. To this argument the appeal to moral consciousness is of course not a sufficient answer. It must be answered upon its own ground. There, however, it is to be noted, it will at least work in either direction. If the higher stage of development contains only what is in the lower, then the lower stage contains all that is in the higher; and there would appear to be no reason why either end of the scale might not furnish an indication of the principle underlying the scale as a whole. Now if sympathy constitutes a factor in the higher valuation, we may expect it to appear in some degree at every stage of moral development. And this expectation is to an extent verified. For we find that even in the lowest forms of animal life, where the *end* of conduct is most difficult to determine, there is hardly a stage in which the need of social sympathy does not appear. We are quick to assume that the impulses of animals and of the lower orders of men are purely sensuous. But the sensuous factor is always to some extent modified by a factor which is not sensuous. One of the most distinctly sensuous of all impulses is the food impulse. Yet even the lower animals prefer not to feed alone, while for men, even sensual men, the pleasures of the table are always incomplete without agreeable company.<sup>1</sup>

(*b*) In the hedonistic argument for chastity the burden of proof is laid upon the material advantages of family life as a method for the care of children. The solidarity of the family presupposes of course a certainty with regard to the relation

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact hedonists themselves have felt the need of lubricating the pleasure system with a certain measure of sympathy. In certain writers (*e.g.* Hume and Adam Smith) sympathy acquires the rank of a fundamental impulse and takes its place by the side of happiness.

of parent and child ; and this presupposes the observance of determinate sexual relations. It is held, then, that the health and proper education of children is more effectively secured under the care of their parents, whose efforts are stimulated by parental affection, than under the care of others. Hence, it is necessary that parental relations be certain and clear, and, for this purpose, that determinate sexual relations be rigidly observed. But if the care of children is concerned only with their health, and if their education is simply to render them self-supporting, the advantages of family life are not immediately self-evident. Parental affection does not necessarily render the parent the most efficient guardian of the child's health, nor the most intelligent director of the child's education, assuming that the purpose of education is simply economic efficiency. On a strictly hedonistic basis it would seem that here, as in many other departments of life, the best results might be obtained through coöperation, that is, through a system of state care for children directed by competent physicians and teachers. Such a system has been proposed, and upon hedonistic grounds. The observance of fixed sexual relations would then be unnecessary. Why is it, then, that a proposal to this effect is generally so repulsive? Because, it seems, a life without family relations, though perfectly self-sustaining, would be highly undesirable. Public education in a larger sense would no doubt save the parents as a class much of the expense and anxiety involved in separate maintenance, and it might easily be preferable for the development of economic efficiency ; but it would deprive the parents of nearly all that renders their life interesting ; and it would produce a race whose individuals, though admirably self-sustaining, would be lacking in all those social qualities which constitute the distinctively human side of life. It is within the family that these qualities are mainly developed. Of course, it may be claimed that these qualities and relations are themselves conditions of economic progress, that without the fact of home and family, men would lose one

of their most important incentives to industry ; but this objection clearly admits that material well-being alone is not a sufficient incentive to effort. And this means, finally, that the purpose of our activity is not the preservation of life as such, but the development of a specifically human life, including among its other qualities the particular form of social quality due to family life.

(c) The hedonistic argument for liberty rests usually upon the economic advantage of spontaneous activity. It is claimed that individuals are more energetic, hence more productive, when acting upon their own responsibility than when under external compulsion. For this reason even coöperation, to be effective, must be spontaneous. But here, as in the case of family life, the economic *utility* of the institution in question presupposes that the desire for it is itself fundamental and elementary. If, as the argument claims, men work more earnestly when acting freely than when acting under compulsion, it would seem that liberty must be placed beside happiness as one of the elementary objects of desire, or at any rate that we must distinguish between happiness with liberty and happiness without it. If men desired material prosperity only, they would accept it without regard to the conditions under which it came, whether they were conditions of liberty or of bondage, provided only that it were sufficient in amount to be worth the effort. They would then work as gladly and as earnestly under compulsion as when acting upon their own responsibility ; they would choose the work which promised the highest returns for the effort expended without regard to its inherent interest, — in fact, if men were consistently hedonistic, the most interesting work would always be that which promised the greatest returns ; and they would live contentedly under the social system which promised the greatest material advantage, without regard to their allotment of political rights. The fact seems to be that men do not desire material welfare alone, but rather that each one has specific plans or purposes,

such as the invention of a machine, the writing of a book, the painting of a picture, the establishment of a home, the attainment of political office or social position, which he feels he must realise. Though men seek material welfare, they seek it first along these lines, and often they will seek it no further than their specific purposes require. This is why the hedonist finds it advisable to make concessions in the form of liberty; but the necessity of the concession clearly implies that men are not satisfied with material welfare alone.

From such considerations it appears that the purpose of human life and the standard of moral valuation is not mere happiness, in the hedonistic sense of animal contentment, but the realisation of all the capacities implied in human nature,—and not mere preservation of life, but the development and perfection of the characteristics that constitute the human type. Hedonism claims that these characteristics have no other meaning than the increase of security and animal contentment; but everywhere in the evolutionary scale we find the demand for mere existence modified by the special demands of the type. Each of the lower animals has its special type of instinctive activities, which it prefers to carry out rather than accept life on any other terms. When we come to man we find the conditions of type much more specific and exacting, and at every stage there appears a certain conflict between the considerations of mere existence and those of the realisation of type. For example, the difference between animal and human marriage lies in this, that for the animal any individual of the opposite sex is (relatively) eligible as a mate, while for each human being only those are eligible (ideally only *that one* is eligible) whose characteristics are such as to constitute between the two a relation of complete personal sympathy. Now there can be no doubt as to which attitude is ethically and culturally higher. Yet it is clear that these higher necessities have the effect of rendering life more difficult, of diminishing the probabilities of reproduction, and of increasing the possibilities of

unhappiness ; from the standpoint of health and contentment alone it would generally pay a man who is contemplating marriage to think as little as possible of these more spiritual necessities, and to emphasise the advantages of health and wealth. The situation here is typical of the moral situation everywhere ; at every point the material considerations would lead us in one direction, the ideal considerations in another. It is true that ideal progress is impossible without a certain improvement in material conditions, but ideal progress is never attained through a consideration of material conditions alone.

### 3. THE OUTLOOK FOR A FUTURE COMPLETE HAPPINESS

A hedonist may accept the analysis of the moral situation which I have just given without admitting it to be a conclusive argument against his position. He may grant that there exists at present, and always has existed, a certain divergence, both in subjective valuation and objective fact, between the conditions of happiness and the demands of morality ; but he may claim that the divergence is constantly decreasing, and will at some time wholly disappear. The time will come, he will say, when moral conduct is completely repaid with happiness, when the conditions of existence are capable of affording a complete satisfaction for all human aspirations. In the meantime the method for bringing about this condition lies in a rigorous fulfilment of ideal demands in the present. Accordingly, though a rigid adherence to ideals may not be repaid by happiness in our own time, it will nevertheless hasten the time when all ideals shall be attained and the sum of human happiness finally complete.

The argument advanced here is of such vital and extended significance for ethical theory that it will pay us to examine it carefully. It presupposes that the course of evolution is marked by a constantly decreasing divergence between desire and satisfaction, and a constantly increasing sum of happiness, and that it will finally come to a stop in a fixed and permanent



condition, where happiness is relatively, if not absolutely, complete. "No one can doubt," says Mill,<sup>1</sup> "that most of the positive evils of the world are in themselves removable, and will, if human affairs continue to improve, be in the end reduced within narrow limits. . . . All the grand sources, in short, of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort; and though their removal is grievously slow,—though a long succession of generations will perish in the breach before the conquest is completed, and this world becomes all that, if will and knowledge were not wanting, it might easily be made,—yet every mind sufficiently intelligent and generous to bear a part, however small and inconspicuous, in the endeavour, will draw a noble enjoyment from the contest itself which he would not for any bribe in the form of selfish indulgence consent to be without." Spencer<sup>2</sup> expresses this view in more positive form when he says that evolution in conduct is, like all other evolution, toward equilibrium—not, indeed, toward the equilibrium of rest, such as that reached at death, but toward a 'moving equilibrium.' Now by 'moving equilibrium' he means a condition of things in which several objects which are all in motion nevertheless preserve a constant relation to each other, such as the equilibrium which exists between the several members of the solar system. Applying the conception to human conduct, the terms to be related are organism and environment; a complete equilibrium would be a complete adjustment to environment. It would mean that all the possibilities of environmental variation had been investigated and carefully calculated, that the appropriate reactions for each variation had been exhaustively practised, until at last the proper reaction to a given situation had become a matter of fixed habit. Such an equilibrium already exists in the activities of the skilled musician, in whom the proper reaction to the variations in the

<sup>1</sup> *Utilitarianism*, ch. ii, p. 22 (Longmans, 1891).

<sup>2</sup> *Data of Ethics*, chs. v and xv.



written notes has become fixed and automatic. Now according to Spencer, this is the final goal of the evolution of conduct as a whole. When the goal is reached we shall no longer act wrongly ; we shall not, even in cases where the consequences are important and far-reaching, have a moment's doubt or hesitation ; but, with every impulse accurately and automatically adjusted to the external conditions, we shall have reached a permanent condition of maximum, if not complete and undisturbed, happiness.

When we search for the ground of this belief it becomes, as it seems to me, immediately clear that the expectation of an eventual equilibrium, or indeed of any permanent progress in the direction of an equilibrium, is completely without foundation. If evolution were tending toward equilibrium, we should expect to find an increase of contentment, a relative absence of worry, of unrest, of problematic situations, in modern times as compared with ancient, in the classes that stand higher in the cultural scale as compared with those that stand lower. The modern literature should be relatively joyous in tone, the ancient relatively gloomy ; those who are favoured with wealth, with its increased opportunities for bodily comfort and for the exercise of intellectual and artistic capacities, should be noticeably happy, the poorer classes noticeably unhappy. Clearly this is not the case. We have no ground for saying that modern times are either happier or unhappier than the ancient, or that the rich are either happier or unhappier than the poor. The most that we could say is that those who lack the simplest necessities of life are predominantly unhappy ; yet when we remember that in a poorly nourished body the capacity for feeling is probably lowered, even this statement does not appear to be quite accurate. It is true that the conditions of life have been in some sense vastly improved. There is no doubt that we of to-day, as compared with our ancestors of a few centuries ago, enjoy a comparative immunity from many diseases, wear better clothing, with more frequent

changes, live in more comfortable houses, and eat a better quality of food. It is this that we usually have in mind when we say that happiness has increased. But with the increase of knowledge and productive capacity has come an increase of demands ; and the newer and more exacting demands gradually assume the same imperative character as the older and simpler ones, conditioning in the same manner not only our happiness but our health. As a result it cannot be said that we are happier or unhappier than our ancestors. Nor can we say that our children will be happier than we. For though they will no doubt add to the improvement in material conditions, they will just as certainly advance their standard of living.<sup>1</sup>

The supposed tendency toward equilibrium and happiness is the product of an illusion, which, though persistent, is nevertheless easily recognised as an illusion. We tend constantly to believe that the possession of the object just out of our reach, from the lack of which we are just now suffering most keenly, is all that we need for perfect contentment. To the sick man health is everything ; give him only his health, and he will not ask for more. To the poor man a competence is everything ; relieve him of the constant anxiety about the means of livelihood, and he will be content. But with the attainment of the object immediately desired the scope of the demand is extended. The man restored to health is now restless for an interesting if not a productive occupation, the poor man who has reached a competency would now be a millionaire. Neither is more content than before or likely to be more content in the future than now. The expectation of contentment failed to count upon the necessary extension of the scope of desire. It assumed that the possession of that from whose absence we were suffering would be a permanent source of happiness. But nothing seems to be capable of affording us permanent happiness.

Apparently it is not the possession but the *getting possession*

<sup>1</sup> See Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*, pp. 231 ff.

of an object which confers happiness, or, if possession, it is at any rate only when we are threatened with dispossession. It is the convalescent who enjoys his health, the man who is emerging from a struggle with poverty who enjoys riches, the man who has just had a narrow escape from death who feels the joy of living, the man who was likely to go hungry who rejoices over his dinner. The secure possession of an object renders the object itself a matter of indifference; it no longer occupies our attention. The striving which is thus set free from the quest of this particular object now seeks other objects which had hitherto hardly entered our horizon.

We do not, therefore, complete the equation of happiness and duty by transferring our standpoint to that of the future. Neither ourselves nor future generations will be permanently happier for moral effort on our own part. Such effort will no doubt result in an improvement in human life. Our control over external conditions will be constantly extended; and human evolution will be a constant movement in the direction of an ideally perfect and complete existence. But though we may expect progress, in this sense, yet we cannot say that progress will be accompanied by any increase of happiness. For whenever we reach a certain point of attainment the object to be attained will assume a more exacting form, and the ratio of desire to satisfaction will be much the same as it was before. We may then expect to find at any point in the evolutionary process just what we find now, — a certain lack of adjustment between organism and environment, a certain contradiction between ideal aspirations and material conditions, between the higher demands of morality and the conditions of contentment.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. THE POSITIVE VALUE OF HEDONISTIC THEORY

Continuing our examination of hedonism, we must now endeavour to define more exactly its positive value. From

<sup>1</sup> See Ladd, *The Philosophy of Conduct*, pp. 473-474; Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ch. i, pp. 86 ff. (3d ed.); Muirhead, *The Elements of Ethics*, p. 139.

this positive standpoint it will appear not only that hedonism has a certain value, but that it fulfils an important requirement of ethical theory in a fairly satisfactory manner.

We have seen that hedonism is a quantitative theory of conduct, that it undertakes to express all the values of human life in mathematical terms. Now this quantitative aspect is a positively necessary aspect of any practical theory of conduct; it is the only form in which we can express an *exact* comparison of values. Let us suppose that a conflict arises between the demands of filial respect and those of advancement in one's profession. Common sense tells us here that we are to respect our parents and to make some sacrifices for their health and comfort; but it also tells us that we are not to make an unreasonable sacrifice,—that, for example, a sacrifice of all of one's professional opportunities for the mere whim of a parent would be not only uncalled for but positively immoral. Where, then, are we to draw the line between a reasonable and an unreasonable sacrifice? Failing to obtain an exact answer from common sense, we turn to scientific ethics. But an exact answer implies quantitative comparison. A quantitative estimate of the value of filial affection may appear at first sight to be highly absurd; yet it is clearly necessary if we are to know *exactly how far* it is to be considered. Comparison is impossible until both objects are related to a common end. And when the end is defined, the preference can be expressed only in terms of *conduciveness* toward the end, the preferable action being that which is more conducive. But 'more' or 'less' can mean only more or less in quantity. Not of course that action is always impossible until the quantitative relation has been determined exactly; for after the end is defined the problem is often so simple that the superior value of one of the alternatives is clear at a glance, though the amount of superiority be still unknown. But if the problem is complex, even the general direction of the solution may remain uncertain until the amount of superiority is exactly specified. And in

any case we cannot hope to realise in our life as a whole a systematic and consistent expression of moral principle until the moral values are expressed in figures.

This quantitative method is a necessity not only of effective practice but at the same time of clear thinking. Grant that the relation of the higher to the lower aspects of human life is, as Mill believes, a relation of superior quality, still it is clear that superiority of quality, and indeed any relations of quality, must, if conceived clearly, be expressed finally in terms of quantity.<sup>1</sup> Red, green, blue, and yellow, for example, remain wholly unrelated, and wholly incapable of description, until they are related in some quantitative formula. When we discover that all the colours are quantitative variations of some elementary colours, or that each holds a particular position upon a numerical scale of variations, it becomes possible to state exactly what each colour is — but not until then. The quantitative method is thus nothing less than the method of science as such, and is therefore implied in any true science of human life. The higher quality of life, to be in any sense 'higher,' must represent a further advance along some quantitative scale; and the advance must be measured, just as the hedonistic method requires, by a specific number of units. The units need not, *a priori*, be units of pleasure, in the hedonistic sense. The higher qualities may mark simply a closer approximation to the distinctively human type. Nevertheless, 'degree of approximation' must indicate ultimately a greater or less distance from a given point; and the activity which shows a higher degree of approximation must in some sense contain more of that contained in the lower degree.

Now there is a certain range of our activity within which the values of actions are capable of relatively exact calculation. This is true to the extent that the actions stand relatively lower on the moral scale. As we go lower, we have to do with conditions which are more imperatively necessary to the continu-

<sup>1</sup> Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, pp. 106-107.

ance of life, which must be fulfilled if life of any kind is to be rendered possible, and which are therefore the objects of more general attention and effort. For this reason they are more completely organised, — that is, the conditions of their production are more effectively controlled ; and this means that their nature and value are more clearly and more universally understood. The value of a bushel of wheat, a dwelling, or a suit of clothing is, generally speaking, more clearly, more widely, and more permanently defined than the value of a work of art or science, or of legal or medical services. The former are also more nearly under our control. We undertake to grow a field of wheat, to bake a loaf of bread, to make a suit of clothing, with a comparative assurance of success ; while the success of a scientific investigation, or of an attempt to produce a certain effect in art, or of a course of medical treatment, is always to a high degree uncertain. In proportion, then, as objects approach the character of necessities they become relatively controllable and at the same time relatively calculable.

Within this region hedonism offers an approximately satisfactory basis of calculation. The pleasure value of objects is here approximately identical with their market value. And, indeed, in popular thought, if not also to some extent in economic theory, pleasure values and market values rest ultimately upon the same basis. In searching for an objective measure of pleasure we tend to fix upon the pleasure of food. So also in searching for an objective measure of wealth — something which shall go behind the conventional currency-measure and give us the real value of the dollar itself — we tend to fix upon some staple article of food, such as wheat. Now to the extent that objects fall within the region of the vital necessities, there can be no doubt that their market value is a fair expression of their real value. The market value of a bushel of wheat may no doubt be artificially raised and lowered, but generally speaking it is a much more faithful indication of the value of its object in terms of the life process generally than the



price paid for a painting or even for a surgical operation. And so it comes about that in the lower and middle ranges of moral action, where the moral problem is very distinctly a problem of earning a living and of providing the necessities of life, the market values of our actions—in other words, their value in terms of material well-being and happiness—furnish a fair indication of their intrinsic moral value. It is quite clear that industry, thrift, and common honesty are economic necessities, and that they have also a relatively definite market value. It is equally clear that, as compared with laziness, shiftlessness, and trickiness, they have a superior moral value. We may say then that up to a certain point in moral development, and within the region where the moral problem has to do mainly with the maintenance of the common economic virtues, the hedonistic standard of wealth, or happiness, furnishes a fair basis for the estimation of moral worth.<sup>1</sup>

When, however, we pass from the middle to the higher grade of morality and culture, we find ourselves in a region where not only is an accurate estimation of values out of the question, but where also the hedonistic standard is clearly inapplicable. Here we have to do with a quality of life which, as compared with the lower quality, exhibits a more delicate and complex adjustment of activities toward more specialised ends; and the finer adjustment is, of course, impossible until the more fundamental conditions of existence have been satisfied. It is therefore not so directly an object of thought and effort for men in general. For this reason life on the higher level remains relatively unorganised, the nature and value of the objects of moral endeavour are not so clearly worked out, and the means of their realisation are not so effectively controlled.

<sup>1</sup> "We have arrived, then, at a sort of estimate of what a philosophy like Bentham's can do. It can teach the means of organising and regulating the merely *business* part of the social arrangements. He has committed the mistake of supposing that the business part of human affairs was the whole of them; all, at least, that the legislator and the moralist had to do with." *Mill's essay on Bentham*, *Dissertations and Discussions* (American ed.), Vol. I, p. 391.



It thus comes about that the measure of inaccuracy involved in the use of the hedonistic method and standard at the lower stages is now greatly increased. At this level it is clear that the meaning of life is not merely greater security of existence, animal contentment, or accumulation of wealth. If the higher quality of life is to be reduced to quantitative terms, we must discover some more comprehensive standard and unit.

This is the point upon which our criticism of hedonism must finally rest, — not upon its choice of the quantitative method, but upon the insufficiency of its unit and standard for all the purposes of calculation.<sup>1</sup> When the hedonist claims that the satisfactions demanded in the higher and more specialised activities are simply greater satisfactions of the impulse which stimulates vital activity from the beginning, he is upon the solid basis of scientific necessity; but when he attempts to limit the life impulse to nutrition, or to reproduction, or to a combination of the two, he is guilty of an assumption. It may be a justifiable assumption for immediate purposes; the definition may be the best that can be made in the present state of psychological analysis. But his unit is none the less inadequate, and not only for purposes of calculation in the higher stages but even as a complete description of the impulses at work in the lower. Not all the activities of the lowest forms can be attributed to nutrition and reproduction. Some of these forms are continuously in motion, and a large proportion of their movements would appear to have no motive whatever. Nevertheless, a definition of the impulse determining their movements must explain the apparently aimless activities as well as those clearly directed toward nutrition and reproduction; it must be sufficiently comprehensive to account for all the activities of the animal. It is probable, therefore, that a final definition of the primitive impulse would be very much more abstract than that which refers specifically to nutrition and reproduction. Now if such a definition of the primitive

<sup>1</sup> See Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*, pp. 66, 67.

life impulse were at hand, we should no doubt have a solid basis for a mathematical computation of the peculiarities of all the higher forms; in any case we should have a reasonably satisfactory basis for empirical estimation. In the meantime, the definition offered by hedonism is merely a rough approximation. The estimates based upon it are, therefore, only partly satisfactory in the lower stages of the scale and highly unsatisfactory in the higher.

When all is said, however, it remains a fact that hedonism fulfils in a fairly satisfactory manner a most important requirement of practical morality. Granting that it places an undue emphasis upon the material side of life, it is still true that for most men this side is the more immediately imperative and important. For most men the ever present problem is the problem of a living; the ever present temptation is to drown the care for the future in some form of present self-indulgence and extravagance; and moral activity means a constant effort to maintain an ordinary standard of decent living, self-respect, and economic responsibility. And even where the circumstances are such as to relieve one of anxiety for a living, one of the most important moral problems is still that of health. In fact, the more conscientious the man, the more strongly he may be tempted to ignore the conditions of health in his absorption in other ends.

In emphasising this aspect of moral values, hedonism clearly takes the side of a genuine and practical morality as opposed to a morality that is merely sentimental.<sup>1</sup> Granting that men

<sup>1</sup> Hedonism, says Bradley (*Ethical Studies*, p. 113), is an attempt to realise something objective.

"The Utilitarian is naturally the man who is beyond all things anxious to have his feet on solid earth, and to assign definite and tangible grounds for every conclusion. He is a realist as opposed to an idealist, prosaic rather than poetical, or belongs to the school which has more affinity for the materialist than for the idealist conclusions. . . . And utilitarian codes of morality are spun from coarser if more enduring materials than those of antagonistic systems."

—STEPHEN, *The Science of Ethics*, p. 375.

See also Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 145 ff.

may overestimate the value of material welfare and may forget the higher demands of life in the desire for animal contentment, it is still true that the higher ends must be realised through the material conditions. A morality which is satisfied with the purity of its ideals, but refuses to study the conditions through which the ideals are to be realised, is a mere pretence. Indeed, it is not too much to say that purely sentimental delights of this kind often approach in character the lowest forms of animal indulgence. Genuine conscientiousness consists not only in the choice of high ideals but in a careful study of the conditions under which results are to be obtained.

It is the observance of these conditions which hedonism emphasises. The hedonist is impressed with the state of comparative destitution in which most men pass their lives; it is clear that this material degradation is also a moral degradation. He observes also that, in the midst of crying material needs, the thoughts of men are wandering toward remote ideal ends and neglecting the possibilities of a more immediate and substantial good. Hence, he argues, the primary if not the sole end of a really practical morality is to promote material welfare. It may be that he has emphasised the material side unduly; but it is a fact that to a large extent his teaching has been successful in effecting a real improvement. It is certain that the distinctly practical tendency in modern morality, which is illustrated in improved sanitary conditions, in a sense of social responsibility with regard to the dwellings of the poor and in the prohibition of child labor in factories, has been largely stimulated by hedonistic teachings. Granting, then, that the theory of hedonism is not a final and complete statement of morals, it is nevertheless largely successful in meeting the demands of a practical statement for immediate use.

For critical discussions of hedonism, see Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay III; Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*, §§ xxiv ff.; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book III, chs. i, iv, Book IV, ch. iii; Grote, *Examina-*

*tion of the Utilitarian Philosophy*; Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ch. i, pp. 42-54 (3d ed.); Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book II, Branch I; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, Book III, ch. i; Murray, *Introduction to Ethics*, Book II, Part I, ch. i; Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, Book II, ch. ii; Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 115 ff.; Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, ch. ix; Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*, ch. vii; Watson, *Hedonistic Theories*; Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*, Book II, ch. v, ii.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HEDONISTIC SOCIAL THEORY AND COMMON SENSE

#### 1. SELF-INTEREST AND DUTY

IN this chapter we continue our examination of the hedonistic theory of conduct, regarding it now as a theory of social duties. The chief question to be considered here is that of the relation of self-interest and duty. How far is my duty to my neighbour, as understood by common sense, identical with the demands of self-interest as defined by hedonism? Or, in other words, how far is the social service required by duty profitable from a private and material standpoint? In estimating the requirements of common sense, we shall be obliged, as before, to content ourselves with a general outline of its point of view. We saw that, for common sense, the passage from lower to higher values is away from the relatively material wants toward those that are relatively spiritual. Looking, then, at the social aspect of the scale, we find a similar progress from a relatively selfish to a relatively social attitude. In the lower stages of moral effort the attitude of the agent toward others is narrowly selfish; he treats others according to the extent to which they can do him benefit or injury. In the middle stages this attitude is modified by certain considerations of justice and gratitude; it is now recognised that one who treats me fairly ought to receive fair treatment in return. But the higher morality goes farther, and obliges me not merely to return service for service but to endeavour, through a cultivation of broader sympathies, to make the interests of all men as far as possible my own. How far,

then, may the higher attitudes be regarded merely as quantitative extensions of the interests represented in the lower?

The nature of our reply has been suggested in the last chapter. There we saw that the hedonistic theory is relatively valid to the extent that we have to deal with the objective necessities of life. These necessities are provided for in the more distinctly commercial and industrial activities. In these our action is more thoroughly controlled and organised, and the values of the goods and services exchanged are more definitely formulated and more universally agreed upon. In some sense all the relations between men may be conceived as relations of exchange. We never give anything without in some sense expecting to receive something for it; even the unfortunate who passes over his purse at the command of a highwayman "gives his money *for* his life." The distinctive feature of the commercial relations is that here the goods and services exchanged have a relatively objective market value, as contrasted with such goods as affection and good will.

Now it is to the extent that our relations between men are organised upon a commercial basis that self-interest and duty are coincident. In this statement the phrase 'to the extent' is to be carefully noted, for otherwise it may seem to make the assertion that in the business world there is everywhere an absolute identity between the requirements of honesty and justice and those of private advantage. It is evident that transactions differ in the extent to which they rest upon a commercial basis. Nowhere, perhaps, is the organisation of the basis of exchange final and absolute. Probably the most definite and objective expression of value is that of a bushel of wheat as quoted on 'change; yet even this may rest to an extent upon an artificial basis, due to popular ignorance regarding the condition of crops, etc. But the value of a bushel of wheat or of a yard of cloth is a relatively objective fact when compared with that of a diamond, or of the style and fit of a suit of clothing, or of a franchise for a street railway. In the case of the diamond



and the clothing, value depends largely upon æsthetic considerations, which may be appreciated by those of cultivated taste, but not easily demonstrated to all. In the case of the railway franchise, it depends upon a very complex calculation of conditions, which can be made only by experts, and even by them not with absolute accuracy. Accordingly, the fashionable tailor or diamond merchant may exercise a large measure of discretion with regard to his prices, and may impose with impunity upon many of his customers. And the promoter of a street railway may easily secure a franchise at a fraction of its true value; and by skilfully watering his stock, and thus concealing his large profits under a nominally small dividend, he may afterward escape detection and effect other transactions of the same sort. But it would be highly unwise for a postmaster to overcharge in the sale of a stamp, or for a railway ticket agent to cheat a traveller in the sale of a ticket, or even for a grain merchant to impose upon a customer ignorant of the market prices. The chances of subsequent imprisonment, or of loss of position, or of loss of trade and reputation, as the case might be, would be too great for the value received.

Taking these qualifications into consideration, we may say that for the great rank and file of commercial and industrial workers the hedonistic theory of social duties is approximately valid. In other words, it is approximately valid for the region extending from the lower to the middle ranges of the moral scale. Within these regions it pays to be honest, just, and industrious in the service of others. If we doubt this statement, it is because we overlook the conditions prevailing within the rank and file of workers, or compare their rewards with those secured by others. We compare the honest workman, or clerk, or salesman, with the rascal who, having found honest work too slow, has taken up politics, then public contracts, then the promotion of stock companies, and finally, after a career of dishonesty, has attained to his millions. But we must remember not only that these regions are not those where values



are easily estimated but also that they are open to very few. Success in such affairs presupposes exceptional opportunities, and though the successful cases are conspicuous, yet the possibilities of success are so exceedingly rare that for the great rank and file of men it still remains true that honesty is the best policy. Or again, we compare the compensation of the clerk or workman with that of the merchant or higher official who receives his many thousands a year, and it seems to us that the respective incomes are not justly proportioned. Here, again, however, we are comparing relatively objective quantities with relatively indefinite. The value of the results attained in a day's work done by a mechanic or clerk is usually a somewhat definite quantity ; but nobody can well estimate the value of the results attained in a day by the president of a railway. It is quite possible that, in many cases, these officers of industry receive more than they are worth to society. It is probable too that, upon a basis of ideal justice, which would consider the individual less as a machine for securing certain results than as a member of society ready to perform his share of social service, the general scale of compensation for the work of directing is too high and that for the subordinate work too low. And on any basis, either of justice or humanity, there are some branches of the latter which receive too little. But granting that for the rank and file of workers taken as a whole merit is not sufficiently rewarded, it is still true that for the individual honesty is the best policy. If you are a clerk in an office or a worker in a mill, your surest way to promotion and increase of wages is through honesty and industry. Your employer may sometimes be deceived by the false show of service set up by a fellow-worker, but in the long run he cannot fail to recognise true merit nor avoid the necessity of paying the highest market price for it. And though you still fail to secure a just reward, as estimated by the value of your services to society as a whole, the reward will at any rate be greater than that to be obtained by any other form of behaviour.

As we leave these regions of relatively organised values, we find that the rule of "honesty the best policy" admits of more and more exception. In the more speculative commercial occupations—the promotion of mines, street railways, and incorporated industries—the dishonest man finds a relatively large opportunity for illegitimate gain. Few people know the value of these things; in many cases the estimation of value depends upon conditions known only 'on the inside.' Consequently there are many opportunities to dispose of worthless stock, or, through the bribery of legislatures, to purchase valuable franchises at a fraction of their true value. Similar conditions prevail in the professions. It is very difficult to estimate the skill or knowledge of a physician, and there is moreover a strong tendency to make such estimates upon the basis of personal prejudices. Other things equal, it is the physician who satisfies these prejudices, who pretends to positive knowledge upon matters of doubt, who flatters the whims of his patients by exaggerating their ills, thus enhancing the value of the cure,—it is he who secures the larger practice and the greater income. On the other hand, a physician who takes a serious view of his profession often feels it his duty to spend his time upon cases where no financial return can be expected. The same is true of the academic profession. Few persons outside of those familiar with the subject in question can rightly estimate the value of scholarship or scientific investigation. Consequently, the public at large is very frequently deceived by false pretensions. And here again men tend to attach the greater importance to the sort of work which appeals to their prejudices, while, on the other hand, a true scholar or investigator would feel it his duty to society to overturn these prejudices in favour of more enlightened views. When we come to the profession of politics we find that the necessity of a certain measure of dishonesty is accepted as axiomatic. For a man of enlightened views and a high sense of honour and public duty, success in politics seems to be,

here in the United States at least, almost impossible. And if we leave the professional and turn to the more personal duties, — such as those of providing for one's family, of helping a neighbour in distress, or of protesting against public abuses, — we find a still wider breach between duty and personal advantage. The clerk or workman has a certain guarantee of payment for faithful service to his employer, but he has no guarantee that his children will care for him in old age, or that the neighbour whom he has helped will serve him in return, or that the public will pay him for his service in removing abuses. In the very nature of the case it must often happen that such services cannot be repaid. Accordingly, we may say that outside of the services organised upon a commercial basis there is no certainty of a reward for the honest performance of duty. This does not mean that greater profit would be found in an extreme form of dishonesty. You are not to assume that the public will be infinitely credulous ; and impositions which succeed for a while may prove unsuccessful in the long run. Nevertheless, if you are working for profit or reputation, you must take the ignorance of the laity — or, as the case may be, the trustfulness of your family and friends — into careful consideration and use it many times not only to your own advantage but to the disadvantage of those with whom you are dealing.

The relation between self-interest and duty is, therefore, the same that was traced in the last chapter between happiness and duty : the coincidence of the two is greater in the more elementary regions of moral effort. And, as was there pointed out, this covers the more important moral problems of the larger number of men. For most men the great moral problem is that of earning a living, and of maintaining a common standard of decency and self-respect. But in no case is duty wholly limited to this field. The poorest labourer may be expected to do more for his family than merely support them, nor does the arduousness of his work excuse him altogether from certain

duties as a citizen and neighbour. Consequently, there is no one for whom the coincidence of self-interest and duty is quite complete. When we arrive at conditions of superior education and opportunities, where the difficulty of mere living is less, the extent of one's duty to society becomes larger. The moral problem is now less to earn a living than to play one's part worthily and efficiently as a member of human society. But in these regions of moral effort there is no guarantee that duty will be properly repaid in the form of material goods. The breach between duty and self-interest has now become wider, and the hedonistic theory of social morality has no longer even an approximate validity.

## 2. THE PLEASURES OF CONSCIENCE

Some reference should be made here to the time-honoured argument of popular hedonism, to the effect that, in cases where a man fails to receive a just return of any other kind for the performance of duty, he is nevertheless sufficiently rewarded by the happiness conferred by a good conscience. The whole argument turns upon a clear conception of the 'pleasures of conscience.' When we make it clear to ourselves what we mean, and what as consistent hedonists we must mean, by these pleasures, it becomes immediately evident that they will often be insufficient to pay for the sacrifice at which they must be purchased. We may grant that the *satisfactions* of conscience may be preferable to any alternative form of satisfaction, but this is not equivalent to a preference for the *pleasures* of conscience. To a consistent hedonist the pleasure of conscience can be nothing but the sensuous feeling which a satisfied conscience offers. It appears in the general elevation of organic processes which comes about when a man's mind is at ease; and the amount of pleasure which a satisfied conscience confers is shown by its effect, in the long run, upon a man's health. Accordingly, when a hedonist says that a man is always rewarded for his virtue by the happiness of a satisfied

conscience, what he means is that the consciousness of virtue is more conducive to health than any amount of the advantages to be derived from wrong-doing, or that the consciousness of wrong would be so detrimental to health as to overbalance any of its advantages.

Now there can be no doubt that such pleasures are real ; that consciousness of duty done, or of wrong committed, has a certain effect upon health, and thus upon happiness, no one will deny ; but that these effects are as great as the hedonist assumes is contradicted by all of our experience. With regard to some of the more horrid crimes, such as murder, we may grant that the argument holds, for it seems probable that, for most men, the recollection of such a crime would weigh so heavily upon the imagination as to constitute a serious menace to health and life. But suppose it to be one of the commoner crimes,—for example, the rather common crime of bribery, where huge sums are to be gained by a single stroke of dishonesty. When we look about us, we may easily point to men of whom we may say, with practical certainty, that their wealth has come in this way. But it would be highly absurd to say that, on the score of health and ease of mind, they have not profited by their crime. On the contrary, they have not only the average of health and good spirits but, if anything, more than the average. Nor do they lack any other advantages. Their money purchases for them a place in aristocratic society ; they have all the cultural advantages to be obtained from travel and a varied experience ; and by extensive gifts to charitable and educational institutions, they are able, with their ill-gotten gains, to purchase the favour, and even the respect, of their fellows. That all these advantages are rendered hedonistically worthless by a secret consciousness of dishonour is in the last degree improbable.

## 3. THE ADVANTAGES OF THE AVERAGE MAN

So much for the general relation between self-interest and duty. Remembering now that life is not made up of purely industrial activities, and that the services required of us are not always those which may be sold for a definite price, let us ask what a man's conduct would be were it regulated on the whole by conditions of self-interest alone. Generally speaking, what sort of conduct is that which brings the greatest rewards for one's services? In the field of commerce it is that which represents the most accurate conformity to the state of the market. He whose gains are greatest is he who buys in the lowest market and sells in the highest, — in other words, he who knows best what his fellows want, and what they are willing to give. But many of our wants lie outside of the field of commerce. Only a part of them may be purchased in the market place, at a definite market price. The satisfactions of intellect and feeling, including those of friendship and personal sympathy, are not often brought to market. We have then to substitute for market price, in these cases, the nearest approach to it, namely, the value they have for the average taste of the community. Accordingly, the man who, as a rule, receives the greatest returns for his efforts, is the man who best appreciates this average of taste ; it is he who knows how to give others what they want and to appreciate what they are willing to give in return, — in other words, it is he whose point of view and whose ideals are pitched most nearly in harmony with those of the average of his fellows. If our personal standard be higher than the conventional social standard, we shall suffer from lack of appreciation ; our services will not be adequately rewarded because there is no market for them. If, on the other hand, it fall below the conventional standard, we shall fail to give the services which society demands. It is unfortunate, from the standpoint of self-interest, to be either a criminal or a reformer. The fortunate man is he who exactly



strikes an average. Like the man of average physical proportions, the man of the ethical and spiritual average finds most things made to fit him. He will no doubt lose some of the finer opportunities. The best things in art and literature, and the most interesting persons in social life, may only bore him ; but his loss here is heavily overbalanced by the multitude of objects which satisfy his taste. For him the theatres offer the greatest number of interesting plays, the booksellers the greatest number of interesting books, society the greatest number of interesting people, commerce the greatest number of interesting and profitable occupations. Whatever efforts he makes receive immediate recognition in the form both of the expression of sympathy and of the offer of opportunity for material advancement ; and in addition he enjoys the most complete approval of his own conscience. It pays, then, from the standpoint of happiness, to be an average man, with a sense of duty and a standard of conduct conveniently pitched in harmony with the prevalent tone of society.

It is clear, however, that we cannot justify any deliberate cultivation of the average. So far as a man has the good fortune, in the matter of ideals and point of view, to rise no higher, he is of course not a subject for moral condemnation. But, on the other hand, he is not likely to be the man who reflects upon moral problems. As soon as we begin to reflect we find ourselves unavoidably in a certain attitude of criticism toward the conventional standards. It need not be an attitude of contempt ; and we need not ignore the fact that the conventional standards create certain social conditions which must be considered if we would live usefully and in harmony with our fellows. Nevertheless, we shall be committed to some measure of resistance ; we shall be struggling to establish higher standards, and thus, to an extent, lessening our enjoyment of the conditions already established. We may say, then, that for one who accepts current standards without criticism, duty and happiness are approximately coincident ; but for one



with an active sense of moral responsibility, such coincidence is nearly always impossible.

#### 4. THE OUTLOOK FOR A SOCIAL EQUILIBRIUM

A hedonist, while admitting a certain divergence between self-interest and duty under present conditions, may nevertheless hold that this divergence applies only to an incomplete social organisation and will disappear when the social organisation is complete. Here we have the social implications of the hedonistic equilibrium. We have seen that self-interest and duty are identical to the extent that activities are organised and their value defined. Hedonism holds, then, that as time goes on the extent of organisation is constantly increasing, and society is therefore moving toward a point at which the organisation will be finally complete. The time will come when all the conditions of happiness have been so thoroughly investigated that the true value of every object has become fixed and self-evident. We shall then be able, without reflection or special calculation, to assign a definite market value not only to a bushel of wheat or a yard of cloth but to all the objects and services that make up our human life, — to the services of art and science, to the satisfactions of conscience, and even to friendship and filial and parental affection. In the presence of such complete agreement and enlightenment with regard to values there will be no opportunity, and indeed no temptation, for the illegitimate gratification of individual interests. For where the value of everything is fixed, an attempt to overcharge, or to give less than one's duty calls for, will be immediately detected and punished, while, on the other hand, the faithful performance of duty will always secure its due recognition. This will be as true of the exchange of personal affection and of the services of art and science as of the more industrial services. In the final equilibrium all individual claims will be perfectly and righteously adjusted, and the social problem will be forever laid at rest.

The expectation of an equilibrium assumes that there is a fixed limit to human evolution, — that there is a point ahead of us beyond which no new desires will develop, no new conditions be found. Since there is a final limit to development, and since all men are gradually approaching it, though slowly and at different rates of progress, it follows that the time will come when all will have reached it. And since the divergence between self-interest and duty is due, as we have seen, to the different stages reached by different men in the development of their appreciation of values, it follows again that, when all men have reached the limit, and when the average of appreciation has become a universal appreciation of ideals and conditions at their final and true value, the divergence of self-interest and duty will no longer exist. But, as was pointed out in the last chapter, there is no ground whatever, either in history or common experience, for assuming that evolution will be limited. It is true that the organisation of social conditions is being constantly extended. The wants that appear are being constantly satisfied. And satisfaction means that the wants in question, together with the conditions through which they must be satisfied, are being gradually investigated and evaluated, until at last their value is completely known, and with regard to these particular wants and activities there is a complete harmony between self-interest and social welfare. But in the meantime other wants have arisen whose value has not yet been estimated, and whose means of satisfaction have not yet been organised. For example, while we are occupied in fixing the value of a railway franchise, newer and cheaper methods of transportation are being discovered and new demands for transportation are being made. Or, while engaged in the reformation of certain public abuses, new conditions have developed and new reforms are needed. We have then a fresh problem of valuation and adjustment, and in the stage preceding final adjustment there are new opportunities for unscrupulous men to turn the situation to their private advantage.

This has been the history of social organisation from the beginning. It is true that the organisation has become ever more articulate and comprehensive ; but it has never been possible to provide in advance for the further development of human wants and the newer conditions involved in their satisfaction. As a result there has never been, and probably there never will be, a social system which will finally secure the just rights of men against the encroachments of their unscrupulous fellows. No better illustration is to be found than the present social condition of our own country. A century ago it seemed that, with monarchy and feudalism finally overthrown, we had reached a form of organisation which would render injustice and oppression forever impossible ; to-day we see this form of organisation made the basis of a system of extortion and of political privilege which is only less oppressive and dangerous to social welfare than the conditions it was intended to remove. No doubt the present social problem will find its solution in a more effective and comprehensive form of organisation, but it is equally clear that the next form of organisation, though an advance in the evolution of society, will have further problems to deal with and require again a reorganisation.

##### 5. THE POSITIVE VALUE OF THE HEDONISTIC SOCIAL THEORY

We have seen that the hedonist finds the ultimate ground of moral obligation in the requirements of self-interest ; and that, according to him, nothing can be regarded as obligatory except that which is of advantage to the agent upon whom the obligation is laid. It is often claimed that this position is in itself contradictory to the demands of morality, since, as it is said, the essential feature of morality is self-sacrifice. But a moment's consideration will show that, for self-sacrifice in any absolute sense, no ground of obligation is conceivable. Unless I am in some way interested in the object whose attainment is set before me as a duty, it seems to be psychologically impossible that I should ever strive for it. And to speak of obligation in

connection with such an object appears to be ethically absurd; for the fundamental condition of obligation is the presence in the agent of a sense of value, or at any rate of the latent possibility of a sense of value. It is this possibility which distinguishes the human being from the machine, and to some degree from the lower animal, and which constitutes the ground upon which he is made responsible for his actions. But the presence of a sense of value with regard to an object means that the object is in some sense an expression of the nature and a satisfaction of the interests of the agent by whom it is valued. The interests in question may not be of the exclusively material kind represented in the 'self-interest' of hedonism, but they must be in some sense the interests of the individual agent. If we were to discover an individual with no interest whatever in what society finds to be good, we could not conceive ourselves to impose this good upon him as a duty.<sup>1</sup> We might endeavour to coerce him, just as we force a machine or a lower animal to conform to our wishes, but we could not conceive him to rest under any moral obligation. Accordingly, the problem of ethics is not to discover a ground for absolute self-sacrifice—for this is in nature of the case impossible—but rather to discover the ground in the nature of the individual upon which we may justify a regard for social welfare, *i.e.* upon which a regard for duty may be rendered reasonable to him. Ethics assumes that the ground exists, that ultimately there is a fundamental unity of nature and of interests among the several individuals composing society. All ethical theories are attempts to justify this assumption and to analyse its meaning. Hedonism takes its start from the standpoint of the individual, beginning with a

<sup>1</sup> "We can be obliged to nothing but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by; for nothing else can be a 'violent motive' to us. As we should not be obliged to obey the laws, or the magistrate, unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, somehow or other, depended upon our obedience; so neither should we, without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practise virtue, or to obey the commandments of God."

— PALEY, *Moral Philosophy*, Book II, ch. ii.

definition of self-interest and endeavouring to calculate the social welfare upon this basis. We may then criticise the definition and the results deduced from it, but we cannot deny that in proceeding in this manner the hedonist has grasped one of the essential features of the problem.

To this theoretical necessity of a definition of duty in terms of self-interest we may add a certain practical necessity. Granting that duty carries me beyond the consideration of bodily necessities and sensuous pleasures, it is clear that it does not involve an indiscriminate devotion to any social object that lies in my way. For the social welfare demands a certain distinction and specialisation of individual function. In order that all may work well together, it is necessary that the duty of each shall be so defined that he may avoid interference with others and at the same time second their efforts in the most efficient manner; and it is then necessary that each shall keep within the line of action assigned to him. This practical requirement is one which the hedonist endeavours to meet. When we ask him for the particular department in which we are to find our individual duty, he refers us to our individual interests. If it be a question of the occupation we are to choose, the hedonist tells us to choose that which we find most profitable; this, he claims, will also be the occupation through which we shall contribute the most to the welfare of the community. And here again, though the method offered be imperfect, the end aimed at is unquestionably valid.

But we have not only to assign to each his appropriate kind of activity, but also to determine for him the region, within the social body, where the products of his labour may be most profitably distributed. In the constant emphasis upon the unity of society and the social aspect of morality, which has characterised most of our recent ethics, popular and scientific alike, it seems to have been largely forgotten that society, however truly a unity, can only be a unity in diversity. Granting that society is not an aggregate of independent individuals,

it still cannot be a homogeneous mass without internal distinctions. Or, more concretely, granting that it is an organism like the human body, still we cannot have an organism without distinction of members, or without distinction in the relations which the members bear to each other. As an individual member in the organism, I am differently related to different individuals and more closely to some than to others. As a husband, a father, a son, an employer, or a servant, or even as a friend, I stand nearer in the social organism to my wife, my children, my parents, to my servant or employer, as the case may be, and to my friends, than to those who stand outside of these relations; and these persons, whether as individuals or as members of the social organism, have a certain priority of claim upon my attention. It is the business of a theory of social duties to cover this variety of relations and to furnish a basis for the adjustment of individual claims,—it is not enough to tell us that morality is social. And this is the duty which hedonism in particular endeavours to fulfil, and which, we may say, it fulfils more adequately than the opposite type of theory. When I ask a hedonist to whom the prior obligations are due, his answer is, “To those from whom you have received, or are likely to receive, the greater benefits. To your parents because they cared for you in infancy; to your children because they will care for you in old age when others have no interest in you; to your employer because he pays you; to your servant because he gives you a return for your money; and to your friend because he will help you in adversity.” And granting that the conception of self-interest upon which these preferences rest is not altogether adequate, and that we cannot accept all the limitations of individual obligation which the conception implies, still we have to admit that both in intention and concrete results it is a step toward the solution of the problem.

All of these requirements the hedonist endeavours to fulfil by a system of calculation, in which, as we noted in the last



chapter, he again aims at a result which must be accomplished if we are to have a clear and systematic view of conduct, — if, in other words, we are to be able to render an exact and adequate performance of duty. If I am to respond to the demand for social welfare, I must know exactly what social welfare is, and to know this exactly is to be able to state it in mathematical terms of quantity. If, again, I am to render just those services which, from the social standpoint, it is profitable for me to give, then I must have my duty stated in terms of amount and direction of social effort. The amount and direction of the services due from me will depend upon the nature and extent of my capacities and interests as compared with those of others. It will thus be necessary to state the social welfare in terms of individual interests, or 'self-interest,' and individual interests in terms of each other, and, therefore, to find a common measure of self-interest. It thus appears that an ultimately clear and exact conception of individual duty will have to fulfil all the requirements of the mathematical scheme which hedonism endeavours to work out.

The difficulty with the hedonistic calculation may be expressed by saying that the result does not fully cover what common sense understands by individual duty. And the source of the difficulty may be placed in the conception of the individual, or the social unit, upon which the calculation is based. Not only is the hedonistic unit insufficient for a calculation of duty, but it does not fully express all that we conceive the individual as such to be. In bounding him by the limits of his body, and his self-interest by the limits of his bodily interest, we are no doubt selecting the only boundary line which we can conveniently use. But upon consideration it is clear that this boundary line is a merely convenient one, for neither psychologically nor physiologically does the individual human being end with his own body. Take, for example, the relation of mother and child. Before birth they are clearly one organism, and for some time



after birth they stand in intimate organic relations, so that each is necessary to the health and well-being of the other. But some of this mutual dependence continues, normally, throughout the lifetime of the mother, — so that it is impossible to state the exact point at which the mother and child become distinct individuals with distinct interests. What we find here is true to a degree of all relations between individuals. Wherever individuals are related there is a certain amount of mutual dependence, which has to do with the necessities of life as well as with the need of sympathy and companionship, and it is difficult to state just what constitutes the boundaries of the independent individual, or where we are to place the limits of his individual interests. The hedonistic definition of the individual and his interests is obviously imperfect, and for this reason it cannot serve all the purposes of a calculation of social relations.

But, while imperfect, it furnishes nevertheless a useful method for the settlement of important practical problems. Of the social theory we may repeat what was said of hedonism in general, that while unsatisfactory it is nevertheless practically useful. Granting that a more satisfactory theory may eventually be constructed, in the meantime we find ourselves called upon to act; and it is better that we should act somewhat inefficiently than not at all. For such purposes hedonism furnishes a clear and not wholly incorrect statement of our individual duty. “In case of doubt,” says the hedonist, “follow the lines of self-interest.” Now there are cases where self-interest clearly conflicts with duty, — where, for example, a man finds it his duty to sacrifice the interests of his employer in favour of others whose claims are greater, and where, in consequence, he suffers the loss of his occupation and income. But in most cases it is clearly best that he should recognise a certain superiority of obligation toward the person by whom he is paid; for if men could not be depended upon to recognise obligations of this kind, it would be impossible to deal

with them in business or to coöperate with them for the attainment of any practical end. A man whose sense of duty toward society were so broad as to be absolutely indiscriminating would be unreliable, not only as a partner or employee, but as a husband, father, or friend ; and a morality which entirely ignored the special claims of individual interests would in the end have little to show in the form of genuine results. So, again, in the interests of duty, the choice of an occupation should often be made along lines which are unprofitable. Yet it is true that, in most cases, the occupation which a man finds most profitable is that also in which he is most useful. He who ignores the question of profit may, indeed, because he has a larger and more adequate conception of what is good for men than what they recognise and are willing to pay for, render society a greater service. But it often happens that an occupation is unremunerative simply because there is no real need for it. There can be no doubt that, while the necessity of earning a living leads men frequently to the performance of immoral acts, it also has the effect of turning their attention away from schemes that are sentimental and impracticable and of fastening it upon objects and activities whose value is genuine and real.

It must be remembered, finally, that to a large extent hedonism furnishes the theoretical basis upon which commerce is carried on, laws made, government administered, and claims settled in courts of equity. It constitutes as such the basis for the machinery of our communal life. Among persons of idealistic tendency there is a disposition to overlook the value of social machinery. "The machinery," it is often said, "accomplishes nothing. It is a mere expression of the social will. You cannot make men just and honest by passing laws to that effect ; for, except as the law is supported by the moral sentiment of the community, it will be impossible to carry it out ; and where the moral sentiment is adequate the law is unnecessary." Hence, it is argued, the only effective method of social reform is education. But the argument looks only

at one side of the problem. We may readily concede that no social machinery will be effective which is not supported by the social sentiment. But let the social sentiment be all that could be desired, we could still not dispense with the machinery. Let it be granted that the motives of all men were absolutely just and honest, it would still be necessary to have the particulars of just and honest dealing objectively and clearly defined. Grant too that every man were completely socially-minded and eager to do his part in the work of society generally, still it would be necessary to have some system according to which the duty of each could be clearly and accurately designated. In the absence of such a system men of the best intentions would be falling over each other in their endeavour to do their duty, and the final result would be waste and confusion. Now hedonism offers such a system, and its system is largely embodied in the present political organisation. No doubt the system is inadequate and the machinery defective, and it will be our constant duty to work for a reorganisation upon a more comprehensive plan. But in the meantime it is to be remembered that the present organisation fulfils those fundamental conditions upon which social life — and, indeed, human life — is at all possible ; and these conditions must also be met in any successful attempt at reorganisation.

On the relation between happiness and self-interest, see Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book II, ch. v ; Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, ch. x ; Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, Book II, ch. vii ; Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book II, Branch I, ch. i, subdivision ii, § 1.



## PART II

### IDEALISM





## CHAPTER IX

### INTUITIONISM: THE ETHICS OF CONSCIENCE

WE may conveniently begin our study of idealism with a brief examination of the several forms of intuitionism. It seems best, in the analysis of idealistic theory, to distinguish three stages of development: intuitionism, which expresses the popular conception of obedience to conscience; rationalism, which reduces the particular dictates of conscience to a general adherence to principle; and self-realisation, which translates the demands of principle into those of a life purpose. The standpoint from which all these theories proceed is that of the inner appreciation of moral values as opposed to that of the external observation of human actions, the latter being the standpoint of hedonism. This internal appreciation of values appears as 'conscience' in the more naïve stages of moral consciousness; as 'reason' in the more reflective stages.

#### 1. DEFINITION OF INTUITIONISM

'Intuitionism' is derived from the Latin *intueor*, to look upon. It means that the rightness or wrongness of conduct is known by immediate appreciation and independently of any consideration of ulterior consequences. As such it is commonly contrasted with utilitarianism, according to which right conduct is determined by a calculation of its utility. *Prima facie*, there would seem to be no connection between the use of calculation as a method and the nature of the end toward which calculation is directed. It would seem that

conduct might either be calculated, or estimated intuitively, as the case might be, whether the end of conduct were conceived as happiness or as the realisation of self. Historically, however, the utilitarian method has been used mainly by hedonists, while, on the other hand, the sympathies of intuitional moralists, so far as they have had any regard for general principles of conduct, have been clearly on the side of perfectionism, or self-realisation. We have already noted the logical connection between happiness as an end and the method of calculation; in chapter xvii we shall see that there is a similar connection between the idealistic conception of values and the failure to attempt calculation.

Sidgwick distinguishes three forms of intuitionism: perceptive intuitionism, according to which it is always the rightness of some particular action that is held to be immediately known; dogmatic intuitionism, in which the general rules of common sense are accepted as axiomatic; and philosophical intuitionism, which attempts to find some deeper explanation for these current rules. The first two will occupy us in the present chapter; the last, under the head of rationalism, will be reserved for the next. Following the first, we shall consider a similar form of theory, known commonly as the theory of moral sense, but which, regarding it as a form of intuitional theory, I prefer to call 'æsthetic intuitionism'; and dogmatic intuitionism will be followed by a consideration of the form of intuitionism represented in a scale of motives.

## 2. PERCEPTUAL INTUITIONISM

Perceptive intuitionism expresses the more naïve conception of 'conscience.' "We commonly think of the dictates of conscience as relating to particular actions; and when a man is bidden in a particular case to 'trust to his conscience,' it commonly seems to be meant that he should exercise a faculty of judging morally this particular case without reference to general rules, and even in opposition to conclusions obtained by

systematic deduction from such rules.”<sup>1</sup> This immediate perception of rightness is frequently interpreted as a revelation of divine will — either as a special revelation for each case, or, more commonly, as the declaration of a faculty of moral judgment which was implanted in human nature at its creation, and which, since it was created by God, is assumed to offer an infallible statement of the divine will. It is this implication which chiefly explains the peculiar respect paid to the unreasoned utterances of conscience; for if conscience is a true revelation of the divine will, reasoning will be not only useless but dangerous.

Now there are no doubt many cases in which the intuitions of conscience are a safer guide than the process of reasoning. Intuition is, in fact, a method used in much of our practical life. It represents habits of thought and action which have become established because, perhaps without consciousness on our part, they have been successful in solving moral problems. The grounds of their adoption may have been worked out and forgotten, or, if the habits themselves have worked smoothly and without conflict, it has never been necessary to work them out. In either case, they are not immediately forthcoming. Now when a tendency of this kind is called into question, it may be that it is not applicable to the existing situation; but surely it is not to be cast aside merely because explicit grounds for it are not momentarily visible. If I have a moral aversion to the use of wine, the fact that, at the moment of receiving an invitation to take wine with a friend, I am unable to find a reasonable ground for my aversion, is surely not a sufficient justification for ignoring it. Nor am I justified in ignoring my scruples against doubtful forms of business transaction merely because at the moment of temptation I can find no logical justification for them. But, in this respect, the moral situation is not different from that which arises in other aspects of life. In any department of life intuition may

<sup>1</sup> *Methods of Ethics*, p. 99 (4th ed.).

often constitute a better guide than reasoning. An instinctive distrust of a neighbour may be more reliable than the apparently trustworthy evidence in his favour ; an undefined suspicion of a certain speculative commercial project may be a better guide than all the calculations which point in its favour ; and an intuitive diagnosis of a disease may be correct, though unsupported and even contradicted by the definite symptoms. Our practical judgments are, in fact, based always to some extent upon mere intuition. But this does not lead us to accept the intuitions as infallible, nor deter us from attempting to reorganise them into something more consistent and systematic. And there would seem to be no ground for a different attitude in matters of moral conduct. Here, as elsewhere, intuition is in many cases safer than reasoning, especially in those cases where an immediate decision is imperative ; but the only hope of a consistent and satisfactory statement lies in the control of intuition through a conscious and deliberate process of reasoning.

This process is forced upon us by the apparent contradictions among our own intuitions at different times, and by the contradictions between our own intuitions and those of others. Where two consciences conflict, the rule of the perceptive intuitionist requires each to trust to his own, and where my own conscience contradicts itself at successive moments, the rule requires me to trust at each time to the utterance of the moment. But this is clearly not our conception of moral conduct. For moral conduct must be first of all consistent ; the primary demand of virtue is a reliable and responsible mode of behaviour. To this the perceptive intuitionist would no doubt agree. Either, however, he assumes that conscience is always self-consistent, in which case he is in flat contradiction with experience and common sense,—since the mere fact that conscientious men are endeavouring to formulate the utterances of conscience into a general principle proves that conscience is not clear and consistent,—or he assumes that, in a case of conflict, one of the conflicting utterances will be found to be the representative of

passion and prejudice rather than of conscience. But in the latter case the necessities of practical life call for some means of distinguishing at the time between the expressions of conscience and those of prejudice ; and such means are to be found only in a general principle of conduct.

### 3. ÆSTHETIC INTUITIONISM

Æsthetic intuitionism, as the moral-sense theory will be called, differs in form from perceptive intuitionism only in conceiving of our sense of right after the analogy of the sense of beauty. Considering the general attitude which the theory represents, I am not sure how far it ought to be classed among intuitional views ; for the tone of the moral-sense philosophers, of Shaftesbury and Adam Smith in particular, is at times more suggestive of hedonism than of idealism. But in form it is hardly distinguishable from perceptive intuitionism, and whatever attention is to be given it may conveniently be given here.

The æsthetic theory conceives of the world as regulated by a principle of harmony. Good consists, then, in a harmony or balance of impulses. The good man is he in whom each impulse receives its proportionate and fitting amount of satisfaction, in whom no impulse satisfies itself at the expense of another, but all work together smoothly. But the individual man is a member of the larger system represented by society. As such his nature demands for its complete satisfaction a larger harmony throughout society as a whole, — just as each impulse is satisfied only by a harmony within his individual nature. Self-interest and social welfare are, accordingly, identical ; the individual nature is fundamentally social, and if the social impulses are not satisfied, the harmony within his own nature is incomplete. Now according to the æsthetic theory, the relations necessary to a state of harmony are not to be determined by calculation and reasoning ; like those which constitute beauty, they can be known only through the appreciations of a

special sense. The sense of moral fitness is thus analogous to the sense of beauty — if not, indeed, the same.

Our estimation of the moral-sense theory will simply repeat with a change of terms the criticism already applied to perceptual intuitionism. There can be no question that a sense of fitness is often a better guide than the results of reasoning. Indeed, we may say that conduct in its finer aspects is the expression chiefly of an æsthetic sense of ideal fitness. The perfect expression of the moral ideal is beyond the reach of reasoned calculation; it requires a delicacy of discrimination in the matter of honour and justice and the interests of others which no system of morals has been able to provide for. And moral conduct is well described, in the language of the moral-sense theory, as a 'fine art.' For conduct represents the effort to live up to our ideal of a man or of a gentleman, as we may choose to express it, and our conception of true manliness or of true gentlemanliness is a matter of appreciation rather than of clear cognition. Probably this will ever be the case, for the considerations involved in conduct are too complex, the conditions and circumstances too varied, to be reduced to a table and worked out by rule of thumb. We may expect, then, that the perfection of conduct will depend always upon a cultivated sense of duty rather than upon a process of reasoning. But the view of conduct as an art offers no ground for a refusal to regulate conduct by principle. Art itself is a constant search for principle. The problem of the artist is that of consistent and harmonious expression; and this means the expression of an underlying principle of harmony. For the artist, the content to be expressed is, of course, too complex and its distinctions too subtle for clear, analytic statement; herein lies the distinction between the artist and the scientist;<sup>1</sup> but unless his expression be guided by some reference to underlying principle, it will prove only meaningless and absurd. In like manner, we

<sup>1</sup> I have endeavoured to formulate this distinction in a paper on "Art, Industry, and Science," in the *Psychological Review*, March, 1901.



may say, the finer aspects of moral conduct will probably be ever too subtle for complete analytic expression; but in its broader outlines we may reasonably attempt such expression, and without the formulation of a principle we cannot hope to maintain a consistent course of behaviour.

#### 4. DOGMATIC INTUITIONISM

Dogmatic intuitionism holds that our intuitions relate not to particular acts as such but to the common rules of conduct. These rules are best illustrated by those of veracity and of good faith; according to dogmatic intuitionism it is my duty to tell the truth and to keep my promises under all circumstances, without regard to consequences. A complete set of such rules, which intuitionists, however, have never been able to furnish, would constitute a ready-made guide to life, to be used much in the same manner as a table of logarithms, only without the possibility, as in the case of logarithms, of testing their correctness by reference to a more general formula.

Here, as before, it is to be observed that the intuitional method has a certain practical value. The common rules of morality are the outcome of long experience. They have been formulated and have acquired their peculiar authority as the result of the whole past activity of the race; and the grounds upon which they rest may be no longer within reach of analysis. They may therefore be regarded as on the whole safe rules for the guidance of conduct, and hence not lightly to be cast aside — certainly not because, at the moment of choice, the ground of their authority is not clearly visible.

But here again the attempt to convert the intuitional method into a universal rule of conduct results in self-contradiction and practical difficulty. The several rules are not absolutely consistent with each other. Even the two which I have specified as the best examples of absolute moral rules — those of veracity and good faith — may sometimes be found in conflict. It may be necessary to tell a lie in order to keep a promise. For ex-



ample, a friend has told me, under promise of secrecy, of his engagement in marriage. I am then questioned with regard to it by a third person. If I plead ignorance, I utter a lie; if I deny it, I also lie; if I choose the only remaining course and refuse to answer the question, or even evade it, I shall in most cases reveal the fact of the engagement, since this particular kind of fact would usually be contradicted if it were not true. Similar difficulties arise in connection with the other rules of conduct. The rule of justice commands me to treat all men according to their deserts; the rule of benevolence commands me to give to others according to their needs. A case where the two conflict is to be found in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, where those engaged at the eleventh hour received the same hire as those who had worked from the first. Here benevolence was preferred to justice; for, surely, if the last-called deserved a penny, the others deserved proportionately more. The parable may be regarded as a simple illustration of the modern 'social problem'; for here too we have a conflict between the rule of justice, which demands that goods should be distributed according to the amount which each has produced, and the rule of benevolence, which, in its most general interpretation, means that all the forces of society should be directed toward the common good.

It is sometimes claimed that these difficulties are due merely to an inexact definition, and that, when the rules are carefully defined, they will be seen to be mutually harmonious. Thus, it is said that the rule of promises assumes that a promise is made with the understanding that its fulfilment will not involve any infringement of the other moral rules; if this should turn out not to be the case, the promise is not valid.<sup>1</sup> Or it is said that we are not required by the rule of veracity to tell the truth to one who will make an evil use of it. Or again, that in rewarding men according to their deserts, we must con-

<sup>1</sup> For an elaborate analysis of the conditions of a valid promise, see Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, Bk. II, ch. xv.

sider, among their deserts, the use they are likely to make of their advantages. But these attempts at interpretation, so far from showing that the moral rules are individually independent and self-sufficient, only serve to reveal their relative character. In each case the rule is limited by a general conception of a good or well-being which is not contained in the mere obedience to the rule itself, and which exhibits the rule as a means to a more general end. In order, then, to obtain a consistent expression of moral conduct, we must go behind the rules and search for a more general principle.

#### 5. MARTINEAU'S TABLE OF SPRINGS OF ACTION

A more philosophical expression of intuitionist theory is found in the interpretation of moral intuition as a graduated system of preferences. Several systems of this kind might be mentioned, but we shall confine our attention to the system of motives, or 'springs of action,' elaborated by Martineau. This system represents the last and most complete development of intuitionist ethics as such. The following table shows the springs of action in order of preference :<sup>1</sup>—

#### LOWEST

1. Secondary Passions ; — Censoriousness, Vindictiveness, Suspiciousness.
2. Secondary Organic Propensions ; — Love of Ease and Sensual Pleasure.
3. Primary Organic Propensions ; — Appetites.
4. Primary Animal Propension ; — Spontaneous Activity (unselective).
5. Love of Gain (reflective derivative from Appetite).
6. Secondary Affections (sentimental indulgence of sympathetic feelings).
7. Primary Passions ; — Antipathy, Fear, Resentment.
8. Causal Energy ; — Love of Power, or Ambition ; Love of Liberty.
9. Secondary Sentiments ; — Love of Culture.
10. Primary Sentiments of Wonder and Admiration.

<sup>1</sup> *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book I, ch. vi, § 13.

11. Primary Affections, Parental and Social ; — with (approximately) Generosity and Gratitude.
12. Primary Affection of Compassion.
13. Primary Sentiment of Reverence.

## HIGHEST

This table rests upon the view that conscience is a declaration not of the absolute worth of particular motives but of relations of worth among the several motives ; acts and motives are not good and bad in themselves but better and worse in relation to each other. Any motive on the scale, with the possible exception of the lowest, may then be allowed a free range of operation until it comes into conflict with another ; in deciding the conflict of motives, precedence is to be awarded to that higher in the scale.

In estimating the value of the table, we may say that, while, in comparison with other forms of intuitionist theory it makes a distinct advance toward a connected view of conduct, it yet fails to satisfy the needs of a scientific and practical theory. As an expression of better and worse rather than of good or bad, it affords, indeed, a means for the coördination of conflicting impulses and of the conflicting moral standards of different persons and different races ; and so far it marks an advance toward a scientific theory. But the aim of scientific theory is to express values in terms capable of verification ; and for this purpose it is necessary that the valuation appear as the expression of a general principle of value. To be intelligible to modern thought relative values should also be expressed in evolutionary terms ; for, to our modern sense, lower and higher are inseparably connected with earlier and later stages of moral development. But though the general point of view expressed in the table of motives lends itself readily to an evolutionary interpretation, such interpretation is evidently not intended ; for we are clearly told that the moral order cannot be conceived to be the result of biological evolution ; that the

appearance of moral consciousness in the history of the world is the appearance of a wholly new and unique factor. Nor is any other principle of value offered. Suggestions of a principle appear, indeed, at several points in the course of the discussion. For example, the motive of reverence, by which I understand reverence for an ideal human nature, is described as the underlying principle of the scale as a whole rather than as an individual motive like the others. Here the theory tends to become identical with the more philosophical statements of Kant and Green. But no attempt is made to explain the working out of the principle among the motives in detail. And ultimately the order of tabulation is determined not by reference to a principle but by an immediate, introspective examination of the moral consciousness.

For this reason the view presents the same difficulties as those found in the other forms of intuitionist theory. There is little more agreement regarding the relative value of motives than regarding the absolute value of particular acts. No doubt the scale of motives expresses to a large extent the valuations accorded by common sense,—so far as common sense is united; and even where common sense is divided, it may, through the mere statement of individual values, be the means of extending the range of unanimity. But where the conflict is more pronounced, the scale will tend generally to win the assent of those only who already favour the idealistic interpretation. To the hedonist, it represents largely an inversion of the true order of value. To him the substantial elements of human well-being—health, comfort, and material prosperity—are to be found in the satisfaction of the motives located in the lower part of the scale; the cultivation of science and art (represented on Martineau's scale by the Love of Culture and the Primary Sentiments of Wonder and Admiration), and even of social feeling, are to him merely more refined means for the attainment of material well-being, and as means they are in no case to be preferred when they conflict with the end. Accordingly,

the table of motives, in failing to offer a scientific principle, fails also to remove the practical difficulty. It leaves us with a statement of relative values, which no doubt adds some clearness to the declarations of conscience, but which fails still to satisfy the sense of value of a large number of conscientious persons; and in failing to state the valuation in terms of a general principle, it offers no means for reaching an ultimate agreement.

It is difficult to state an intuitional view without having it develop insensibly into a form of rationalism or self-realisation; hence it is hard to find any purely intuitional literature of a respectable sort. The most modern representative of the school is Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*. The best previous exponent is Butler, *Three Sermons upon Human Nature*. His theory of conscience leans toward perceptive intuitionism. The representative of the æsthetic theory is Shaftesbury, *An Enquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit*; for a statement of Shaftesbury's theory, see Martineau, Part II, Book II, Branch III, ch. i. See also Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ch. i, pp. 76-120 (3d ed.); Sidgwick, *History of Ethics*, pp. 170, 200, 213, 224; Porter, *Elements of Moral Science*, ch. viii.

Closely related to the intuitionists are the English rationalists, Cudworth, Clarke, and Whewell (see the note appended to ch. x).

Discussions of intuitionism are to be found in Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. iv; Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, tr. Thilly, pp. 363 ff.; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. i; Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book III.

## CHAPTER X

### RATIONALISM : THE ETHICS OF PRINCIPLE

RATIONALISM, the modern version of stoicism, is so prominently identified with Kant, and Kant's formulæ are so widely current in popular thought (however vague our conception of his moral philosophy), that it seems best, in this chapter, to depart more than usual from our non-historical method of presentation and derive our notion of rationalism from an interpretation of Kant. It has just been noted that the several forms of intuitionist theory all fail to reduce the dictates of conscience to the form of a general principle, and that, for this reason, they fail to offer either a practical or a scientific statement of conduct. Now it is this necessity for a moral *principle* — the theoretical necessity for a statement which shall be universally true, and the practical necessity for an attitude toward men and things which shall be absolutely uniform—which constitutes the burden and emphasis of Kant's moral philosophy, — to such an extent, indeed, that, as we shall see, all other demands are practically ignored.

#### 1. KANT'S ETHICAL THEORY

There are several avenues by which Kant's position may be approached, but perhaps the most direct is that opened by the conception of duty. In Kant's mind the significant and all-important feature of morality is its aspect of imperativeness. The right is not simply the desirable, but that which has absolute authority to command. Right is the expression of law ; as such its demands are universal and invariable, making no conces-



sions to persons or circumstances ; and the essential feature of the moral life is unconditional obedience. Accordingly, it is this authoritative aspect of morality which sets the problem for his theory of conduct. Conceiving of morality as law, what presuppositions are necessary to justify its authority? What must be our view of man and of the world if we are to conceive of duty as real? All of Kant's moral philosophy may be regarded as an answer to this specific question.

Now a universal and imperative moral law must be, in the first place, a law of reason, — that is to say, it must be an *a priori* deduction from the conception of good rather than a mere generalisation of the particular goods which men seek, or of the particular duties which they recognise. This means that the moral law must be deduced in the same manner as all other universal laws. For example, it is a universal mathematical law that the sum of the angles of a triangle must equal two right angles ; but its universality presupposes that it is a deduction from the conception of a triangle and not a record of measurements ; for if it were only a generalisation of measurements, we could not be sure that we should not yet discover a triangle of which these relations would not hold true. In like manner, if our moral law were merely a record of what men do or of what they approve, we should have no ground for believing that men's actions might not at any time show a complete change of direction, thus completely contradicting our present conception of morality and nullifying its obligation. To be certain, then, that our moral law is of universal application and absolute in its obligation, we must found it securely upon the conception of fundamental good ; the goods that men actually seek may represent only passing inclinations.

But nothing is fundamentally good but the good will. In other words, if the moral law is to be universal in its application and absolute in its obligation, if it is to be imperative for all times and seasons, it must represent the nature of the moral agent rather than his circumstances or environment ; it must



be not simply a law of reason but a law of self. Conduct which is the reflection of circumstances cannot show the consistency demanded by law ; for circumstances are a matter of chance ; I cannot say in advance just what the situation will be. Granting that the course of circumstances on the whole shows a certain uniformity, still for any particular agent they are shifting and uncertain, and form an unreliable basis for a consistent course of conduct. Nor does the mere pressure of circumstances impose any real obligation. Granting that certain objects affect me pleasantly and others painfully, still I am under no obligation to choose the former and reject the latter except as I judge it reasonable to do so ; and, according to Kant, it is conceivable that I may judge it reasonable to reject the pleasure and accept the pain. The obligation imposed by circumstances is therefore purely relative. As Kant puts it, the imperative is merely hypothetical, not absolute and categorical ; it means merely that you must adopt the means if you would have the end, and contains the implication that the end may be rejected. Absolute obligation presupposes, however, an end whose rejection is inconceivable — in other words, an end which the agent could not reject without self-contradiction. And an end of this kind is determined only by the nature of the agent himself ; that only is logically and absolutely obligatory which expresses the demands of my own nature.

These two presuppositions of moral law receive joint expression in Kant's view of human nature. If the moral law is at the same time the law of reason and the law of self, it follows that reason and self must be identical ; the principle of rationality must be the principle of human nature and, conversely, the principle of human nature must be the principle of reason. In its last analysis, the fact of duty presupposes that man is a rational being ; if he is not rational, then duty is an illusion. It would seem, then (one might be inclined to reply), that duty must be an illusion, for it is clear that the activities of men are by no means exclusively rational ; they are frequently the out-

come of blind impulses. This objection would be met by a disciple of Kant with a distinction between the real man and his external circumstances, and between the acts that represent his independent choice and those which are the passive effects of his circumstances; whenever a man's act expresses his own choice, the act is rational. The real man is the rational man. Now the antithesis of 'reason' is 'feeling'; and feeling represents the effect produced by external objects upon the human body. It is as completely distinct and separate from the real nature of the man as his house or his clothes. And not only is it distinct, but it positively interferes with the expression of himself as a rational being; for it is the pressure of feeling which prevents a man from giving a subject a rational and impartial consideration, and which hurries him into action before the reasonable course is clear.

But the moral law requires still a further presupposition: it must be ultimately not only a law of human nature but a law of nature as such; and not only *a* law of nature but *the* final and fundamental law of nature. It is only thus that the law of duty could be absolutely universal and imperative; for if the law of human nature were subordinate to some higher law, its range of application would of course be limited, and there would be cases in which the lower law would be superseded by the higher. Absolute obligation presupposes that the human being represents in himself the principle of the universe. This, then, is the conclusion which Kant finally reaches: if duty is to be regarded as real, then not only must the principle of human nature be identical with the principle of rationality, but the human and rational principle must finally be the principle underlying the world as a whole.

So much for the theoretical side of Kant's ethics. Before turning to the practical side something should perhaps be said with regard to his theory of society. If the law of duty is the law of self, the way seems open for a conflict of duties between individual selves; and if the moral law prescribed conflicting

courses for different individuals, it could hardly be regarded as universal or absolutely obligatory. But the possibility of conflict is precluded by the presupposition that the law of self is the law of reason. Conflict is due solely to the presence of feeling. Since the course of feeling is governed by the play of circumstance, and hence follows no law, there is no ground for expecting a unity of feeling in a plurality of individuals. We may expect rather that the interests of one will be frequently opposed to those of others. But between rational beings as such there can be no conflict ; for since the aims of all are strictly rational, they are necessarily identical, or at least mutually consistent. A community of rational beings is thus, on the one hand, a society of free persons — since the social ends represent also the spontaneous choice of each individual — and, on the other hand, a harmonious social system. This view of society is embodied in Kant's conception of a ' Kingdom of Ends.'

## 2. KANT'S PRACTICAL MAXIM: THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

We have then to note Kant's formulation of the moral law into a practical rule of conduct. This is to be found in the famous 'categorical imperative,' which is formulated as follows : "*Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*" This rule, it will be seen, is the direct practical corollary of his theory of human nature. Assuming that the basis of human nature is reason, or law, we must, to realise our good and also to perform our duty, make our conduct the objective expression of universal law. And this is the meaning of the categorical imperative. It might be more briefly expressed as follows : "Let your conduct be always the expression of law." But we have to remember that the law of human nature is ultimately the law of nature as such. With this in mind Kant elsewhere states the rule as meaning that we are so to act that our conduct might become a law of nature. This means, in the language of common sense, that we are to show the inflexible consistency of 'men of principle' as

opposed to the vagaries of creatures of passion and impulse ; as men of principle our actions will show that rigid uniformity and consistency which is postulated of a law of nature. Kant offers the following illustrations of the manner in which his rule operates : Suppose that I am tempted to borrow money which I know I cannot repay. A reference to the rule of conduct shows the act to be wrong, for if every one borrowed money with no expectation of repaying, a promise to pay would soon have no value and men would refuse to lend ; and this is a situation which I cannot will to exist. Again, suppose that, though prosperous myself, I am disinclined to help a friend who is in need. This, again, is an act which I cannot will to become a universal law, for, if all men adopted this attitude, human life would be impossible. Or, further, suppose that I am tempted by personal misfortunes to take my own life. This could clearly not become a universal law, for the race would then cease to exist, and as a human being I cannot accept this result without self-contradiction.

Since moral conduct is determined by respect for law, it follows that conduct which arises from any other motive, though externally correct, is without moral value. If a man is honest from motives of advantage, or refrains from taking his life from motives of fear, or gives to the poor from motives of pity, his act is morally valueless ; for the dictates of feeling are wholly irrelevant to the question of duty. It is uncertain how far Kant considered such motives to be positively *immoral*. He did, however, think it necessary to protest against the practice of teaching children their duty through an appeal to their inclinations. For in any case, he thought, the appeal to inclination and feeling is liable to obscure the true principle of duty and thus indirectly to foster the habit of judging conduct from other standpoints than that of duty as such.

Since the law of conduct is also a law of self, the categorical imperative is capable of further expression in terms of respect for self, or — remembering that the essential principle of self is

identical with the generic principle of human nature — respect for men as such. It then reads, “*So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal and never as a means only.*” In a word, treat human beings always as ends, never as means. This rule is merely a restatement of the former rule. When I perform an act which I cannot will to be a law for all, I give the preference to my own advantage and make the interests of others subordinate to my own. I then treat myself as an end to which the others are only means, *i.e.* I ‘make use’ of other persons, treating them as if they were of no more significance than objects of wood and stone. But when I so order my action that it becomes the expression of universal law, I make the ends of others identical with my own and treat humanity as such as an end absolute in itself. This identification of interests should not, however, be confounded with self-sacrifice. For self-sacrifice means that, while treating others as ends, I convert myself into a means, and the latter is as much an offence against human nature as the former. It is to be noted also that self-sacrifice as such would not represent a strict conformity to universal law; for example, in remitting a just debt to a debtor who is able to pay, I cannot will that the act should become universal. The point to be remembered is that the human being whom I am commanded to respect as an end is the strictly *rational* being who demands nothing but what is impersonally reasonable. As rational beings the ends of all are identical; therefore, each in treating the other as an end furthers his own purposes while any one who treats another as an irresponsible means must in some way defeat his own purposes and thus act in a manner that is self-contradictory and irrational. In view of the ultimate identity of the principle of reason and the principle of human nature it becomes the same thing to treat human beings as ends and to act in accordance with reason.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See ch. xii, 4.

## 3. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

In the foregoing I have endeavoured to present Kant's view in substantially the same form in which it is presented by Kant himself. Something more needs to be said to render it intelligible from a common-sense standpoint. But before going further it will be well to note the essential difficulty of the theory as formulated by Kant, and its ground in Kant's psychology.

When Kant tells us that we are to act so that our conduct may be the expression of universal law, he appears at first sight to have given us a rule which will fully meet all possible contingencies, and which, moreover, is nothing but a more exact expression of a rule which already gives satisfactory results wherever it is applied in daily life, — namely, the 'Golden Rule' of the New Testament. And there can be no doubt that Kant's maxim, like that of "Do unto others, etc.," is an excellent rule of thumb for ordinary use. But we need not go far to meet with cases in which it no longer guides us. For example, suppose the temptation arise to take advantage of the ignorance or generosity of one's neighbour. In the case of most men the application of the rule would probably settle the question in the manner which we judge right, since most men would prefer fair dealing as a general condition of commerce. But it is conceivable that a man might be quite ready to accept the opposite condition, preferring to take his chances of being cheated by others to refraining from the practice of dishonesty himself, and even thinking it right that a man should take the consequences of his ignorance or want of watchfulness. (For that matter, is not the latter view clearly implied in the common claim that the successful speculator in stocks or real estate merely reaps the just reward of a superior sagacity?) Or, again, a man tempted to take his own life might be quite willing that any one else who found his life unprofitable should do the same, or he might even hold, as some men do, that life as such is an evil, and that the only motive which pre-



vents men in general from ending their lives is an irrational and superstitious fear. An application of the Kantian rule to these cases would clearly not lead to the performance of what we judge to be right conduct. A disciple of Kant might then claim, referring to the last illustration, that a man could not take his own life without self-contradiction and inconsistency. But between what terms does the contradiction lie? There appears to be no inconsistency in a man's taking his own life if he be willing to accord the same privilege to others, and certainly there is none between the act of self-destruction and the judgment that life is an evil. It is true, however, that for men in general the action would involve a real self-contradiction. And this shows us where the inadequacy of Kant's rule is located. For the self-contradiction lies in the fact that most men, if not all, have a prevailing desire to live. They may be tempted in adversity to take their own lives, but after they have resisted the temptation they are usually glad to have done so. It is, consequently, the *desire* for life, with the implication that life in general is desirable, which makes it possible for them to decide a question of suicide according to the Kantian rule. In every case where the rule may be applied, it presupposes a conception of the desirable. Apart from such a conception, there is no reason why any practice should not become universal. Even war could so be willed if conflict were felt to be desirable. The categorical imperative is thus, in itself, not a sufficient guide to conduct; the irrationality of any result rests not upon its *a priori* inconceivability but upon its practical undesirability; and in order to decide what kind of conduct we can will to become universal, we must first know what kind of conduct is desirable.

The indeterminate character of Kant's rule is the result of his psychological theory, in which he offers a purely intellectualistic conception of 'reason.' Every mental quality which is not pure intellect, including all the aspects of impulse and desire, is classed by Kant under the head of mere feeling, which,



as we have seen, he tends to identify with bodily feeling, and ultimately with a purely physiological process. This converts the operation of reason into an activity purely intellectual, and the rational being into a being of pure intellect without any admixture of desire. Upon this basis it becomes impossible to conceive of a rational choice. From the standpoint of intellect alone nothing can be regarded as either good or bad, valuable or valueless, rational or irrational. All our judgments upon the rationality of conduct are based upon the presence of desire, or at least upon a conception of the desirable. And for that matter not only our valuation of conduct but all our interpretation of it; for without the presence in ourselves of desire, or the capacity for desire, it would be quite impossible to know what other persons were doing. If I never had an appetite for food myself, another's act of eating would be wholly a mystery. To one with no taste for music an opera is an absurdity; that men and women should appear on the stage and communicate with each other in song to an instrumental accompaniment is to him in the highest degree meaningless, while to the man with a love for music nothing could so truly express the realities of thought and feeling. So, again, to a man who has never played tennis nothing could be more puerile than the occupation of passing a rubber ball back and forth across a net. We say that this is because he fails to 'understand the game.' But an 'understanding' of the game is not to be obtained through reading the rules; it means that one must have played, and felt for one's self the fascination of the problem involved in meeting the ball and returning it to the other side of the court. A creature without desire would accordingly view life as a whole from the standpoint of the man who looks on at a game without feeling its significance. He could not judge an act rational or, for that matter, irrational. He could neither will an act to become universal nor will it to be otherwise. To a rational being, in the purely intellectualistic sense, the whole problem of conduct would be a matter of entire indifference. And here it is

to be noted that our more modern psychology does not separate (though it may distinguish) reason and desire. Nor are they separate in common sense. A rational person is not a person without feelings or desires, but one whose desires are controlled with reference to the more desirable objects.

From the intellectualistic conception of self it is also impossible to derive a sufficient guidance for conduct from the rule of treating human beings as ends and never as means only. No doubt the expression has a meaning for our common sense, and clearly we know what is meant by 'making use' of a man; but this is because we already have some conception of what men in general hold to be desirable, and of what they identify with themselves. According to Kant's conception, the sole principle of human nature is the demand for conformity to universal law; theoretically, at least, it makes no difference to the rational being what we do to him provided only that we treat him impartially with relation to others and to ourselves. Following Kant's rule, it would make no difference whether we treated our neighbour kindly or harshly, provided only that we treated all alike, and were ready to take as good as we gave. In either case we should be treating him as an end in himself.

#### 4. THE POSITIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF KANT'S VIEW

We are not to suppose, of course, that Kant anticipated or would have accepted this consequence of his teaching; and we may assume, therefore, that the purely intellectualistic conception of reason and of the rational being did not after all express his real meaning. This supposition is confirmed by a consideration of the cases by which he illustrates the application of his rule. His favourite illustration is the duty of self-preservation, for he seems to think that suicide is a perfectly obvious case of self-contradiction and irrationality. But what is the ground of the self-contradiction? Kant answers as follows: "a system of nature in which the very feeling whose

office is to compel men to the preservation of life should lead men by a universal law to death, cannot be conceived without contradiction." In other words, it is the feeling of self-love which both keeps men alive and at times tempts them to take their lives; and a state of things in which a feeling whose real function (Kant assumes) is to preserve life may also lead to its destruction involves a self-contradiction. The irrationality of suicide rests, then, upon the presence and character of the *feeling*, or *impulse* toward self-preservation, not upon the abstract inconceivability of self-destruction as a universal law. Next to the duty of self-preservation, Kant emphasises that of self-development. "There are, in humanity, capacities of greater perfection, which belong to the end that nature has in view in regard to humanity in ourselves as the subject; to neglect these might perhaps be consistent with the *maintenance* of humanity as an end in itself, but not with the *advancement* of the end." From these expressions it would appear that the nature of the rational being includes the impulses toward life and growth, and that it is the presence of these impulses—not the quality of abstract rationality—which converts suicide, or the failure to develop one's capacities, into a self-contradiction. In these illustrations the theory of Kant approaches that form of theory which we shall consider presently under the name of 'self-realisation.'

What are we to understand, then, by Kant's conception of a rational being? To answer this question we must remember, in the first place, the distinction between 'rational' and 'mechanical' implied in Kant's use of the former, and, in the second place, the popular though now somewhat obsolete usage of 'rational,' in which it refers not so much to intellect alone as to the characteristics which distinguish human beings from the lower animals. No doubt Kant tends to reduce the significance of the term to the limits of the intellectual, but this is because he feels under the necessity not only of distinguishing human beings from mechanical bodies but also of

drawing a sharp line between human nature and the nature of the lower animals. But the latter is a distinction which all our later thought has tended to efface. And I believe that when we make it an important factor in an interpretation of Kant, we miss the positive significance of his point of view. What he has in mind, it seems, is not so much the distinction between men and animals as the broader distinction between human beings and mechanical objects. Now what is the chief difference between these two orders of things? Clearly, we may say, the presence in the former of self-consciousness, — in other words, of consciousness as such. The human being knows what he is doing; the forces directing his activity work consciously. In the mechanical body they work unconsciously, knowing neither the sources from which they came nor the ends which they are to accomplish.

This is what Kant has in mind when he says that moral obligation presupposes a rational being as agent. It is the quality of self-consciousness which is the source of our moral responsibility. Not that mere awareness of one's movements would without any further implications constitute a sense of responsibility. The essential point in the argument lies rather in the assumption that consciousness of movement completely alters the character of the movement. While steam is up and the throttle open a locomotive will keep up its speed without regard to whether the track before it is broken or continuous, or whether a drawbridge is open or closed. The inevitable character of its movement is due to the fact that it is 'blind' and unconscious. Ordinarily we say, to be sure, that the movement is determined by the amount and direction of the mechanical forces at work in producing it; but in the term 'mechanical' we imply (though we do not often recognise the force of the implication) that the forces at work are *not conscious*; it is the absence of consciousness which gives them their mechanical and inevitable character. If we imagine them to have become conscious of what they are doing, it

becomes inconceivable that their activity should not be controlled with reference to desirable ends. It is inconceivable that the locomotive, become conscious of its situation, should not make some effort to slacken its speed and avoid the impending danger, however difficult it may also be to imagine how this effort could be made by an object so constructed. It is inconceivable that a force, become conscious of itself, should not attempt to control its direction; a 'conscious machine' could no longer remain a mere machine. Now it is just this capacity for self-control which constitutes the basis of moral obligation; and, therefore, a being conscious of itself and of its situation would, through the fact of consciousness alone, become morally responsible. It is in this sense that moral obligation presupposes a 'rational' being as agent. Moral obligation presupposes that the agent knows what he is about, and that, knowing what he is about, he is able to choose his ends and to direct his action toward the ends of his own choosing. If self-consciousness is an illusion, or if it is after all unrelated to self-control, moral obligation is out of the question.

But, further, it is this conception of a rational being which is implied in Kant's view that the law of reason must also be a law of nature, and ultimately the final and fundamental law of nature. Here his argument rests upon the very common view that consciousness must somehow represent the inner reality of things as distinct from their external appearance; that the real nature of the man must be his thought and feeling, of which his body and its actions are to some degree a cloak and a concealment. But we cannot conceive of the world as made up of two irreducibly different orders of things, rational beings and mechanical objects; ultimately it must be one homogeneous reality, acting according to one universal law; and the law of human nature cannot be really different from the law of nature as such. Accordingly, if the ultimate and real principle of human nature is the rational and spiritual principle, this must also be the principle constituting the reality of the world as a whole.

How, then, are we to conceive of the actual distinction and relation between human beings and mechanical objects? Evidently thus: in humanity the world principle has become fully self-conscious. Not only is the rational being conscious of the forces at work in his nature, but the forces of nature have come to self-consciousness in him. It is in consciousness that the world reveals its true nature and meaning, — a meaning which is only imperfectly embodied in mechanical movements as such; and it is through conscious action that this meaning is expressed in an overt, objective manner. Now the most perfect revelation of the conscious principle (at least within our range of experience) is the human being; he may therefore justly regard himself as the highest expression of the principle of activity governing the universe as a whole. As such he is himself the source of all law and all value.

To conclude, then, — when Kant tells us that the conception of duty presupposes that man is a rational being, what he means is not that he is a purely intellectual being, without any admixture of desire, but rather that he is a self-conscious being, and thus distinguished from mere mechanical objects. And if we go farther and affirm not only, with Kant, that duty presupposes self-consciousness but that both are also realities,<sup>1</sup> what we mean is that consciousness is a real quality in human nature, that it is really operative in determining the direction of human activity; we then take our stand in opposition to hedonism and materialism, which affirms that consciousness has no power to direct our activities, and that it is ultimately not a real quality but a mere appearance and illusion.

Kant's theory is given in the *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* and *Critical Examination of the Practical Reason*, translated by Abbott in *Kant's Theory of Ethics*.

<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that Kant never quite commits himself to this view. His problem is, If duty is genuinely authoritative, what view of man and of the world is presupposed? He analyses these presuppositions, but does not commit himself either to their reality or to the genuineness of the authority which they support.



For analysis and criticism, see Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, Book II; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay iv; Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book III, ch. xiii; Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics* (3d ed.), pp. 190 ff.; Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 165 ff.; Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*, § xxxvi.

Rationalism has also its representatives in English thought; before Kant, in Cudworth (1617-1688), *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutability Morality*, a work which very closely anticipates Kant's view, and Clarke, *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (1731); after Kant, in Whewell, *Elements of Morality*.



## CHAPTER XI

### SELF-REALISATION: THE ETHICS OF PURPOSE

At the beginning of our treatment of idealism it was suggested that the three forms of idealistic theory might be regarded as logically successive stages in the process of reducing the utterances of conscience to a clear and consistent form of expression. We have seen how the various forms of intuitionism lead to the search for an underlying principle; and in our criticism of Kant we have seen that a moral principle, to have content and meaning, must be the expression of human desire and tendency. We come now to the consideration of a form of idealistic theory in which these conditions are supposed to be fulfilled. In the theory of self-realisation we have both the logical consequent of the earlier forms of idealism and the form which is historically later, being the form of idealism which is predominant to-day.

#### 1. THE PROBLEM OF SELF

An analysis of self-realisation should begin with a definition of 'self'; for it is from a particular view of self-activity (*i.e.* the activity of self-conscious persons as distinct from that of mechanical bodies) that its meaning is derived. There are two questions to be answered in the definition of self: first, What makes me the same as I was yesterday? secondly, What distinguishes me from other persons? The second question belongs in the next chapter; the first will be taken up here.

This question is commonly felt to be of vital importance. Whether the chair upon which I am sitting is the same chair

to-day as it was yesterday is a matter of relative indifference. It is enough that the chair of to-day serves the purpose for which it is used. We care not whether parts of the chair have been replaced by others, or for that matter whether the chair has been replaced by a wholly new one. In fact, we are not interested in having the chair maintain an absolute self-identity; and we cheerfully recognise the fact that all material things undergo a constant change, — that from a condition of newness and completeness they wear out and decay, and eventually disappear. But with personal identity the case is altogether different. We feel it to be of vital importance to maintain our personal integrity, to remain the same persons to-day that we were yesterday, the same to-morrow as to-day. If I am not to remain the same, if I may at any time be replaced, like the chair, by another equally good, then why should I of to-day take thought for me of to-morrow? How can I of to-day be in any way interested in the morrow? It would seem, then, that if moral activity is to be rendered in any way reasonable, the identity of the self must be something very much more real and permanent than the identity of material objects. So strong is this feeling that we tend to conceive of the self as a *soul*, which not only maintains an absolute identity from infancy to old age, but continues to remain the same after the dissolution of the body, and was already the same before the body was formed.

## 2. THE SELF OF HEDONISM

We shall more easily grasp the idealistic conception of personal identity after a review of the hedonistic attempt to explain it away. The conception of personal identity, and the distinction of self and not-self, has no vital significance for hedonistic theory. It is for this reason that it has not been worth while to refer to it in our previous discussion. For hedonism the value of 'personal' interests depends, like that of all other interests, upon their quantitative results in terms of

sensuous pleasure. The suffering caused by a defamation of character is like that caused by the burning of one's house, a question of amount. But as a matter of fact the circumstances are such as to render the former usually greater. The distinction of personal from purely material interests and the conception of self-identity has then a present, practical meaning, though it has no meaning that is ultimate and real.

In chapter vi we saw that the hedonistic method of describing or defining an object is that of natural science, which tells us the stuff of which the object is made. An object which remains the same must, therefore, retain the same material. It is this method which determines the hedonistic conception of self. As conceived by Mr. Spencer, the self is that group of impressions which remains the same throughout our experience. The distinction of self and not-self is thus a distinction between the permanent and transient features of our consciousness. The ideas which refer to self are those which are permanent as distinct from those which are merely occasional. Self-activity is habitual and uniform activity, as distinguished from that which is variable. Self-interest is the interest which is constant and permanent. As Mr. Leslie Stephen puts it, "That motive is most important for any man which corresponds to his strongest and *most frequently stimulated* instincts."<sup>1</sup>

Now the only ideas, or images, which appear permanently in consciousness are those representing one's own body. This is so evident that it needs no elaboration. All other objects, including the bodies of other persons, come and go in consciousness, but whenever we have any consciousness whatever, it includes a perception of our own body. Connected with the perception of the body are the feelings and desires that belong to the body. So it happens that our most frequently

<sup>1</sup> *Science of Ethics*, p. 73. The italics are mine. For a statement of the hedonistic self, see Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, Part VII, chs. xvi and xvii, in particular pp. 471 ff.

stimulated instincts are the bodily instincts, typical cases of which are the desires for food and for rest. In the sense that they are immediately the most imperative, these instincts are also the strongest. A man may be deeply interested in his business or profession ; nevertheless, he is obliged to spend a large part of his time in the satisfaction of bodily wants ; and if these wants are not satisfied promptly, they quickly become so clamorous as to crowd all other desires out of consciousness. Consciousness of self is, therefore, for hedonism, consciousness of bodily existence. Self-activity is the activity of one's own body, as distinct from that of other bodies ; and self-interest is directed toward the satisfaction of bodily needs.

We have seen, however, that the hedonist does not remain content with a definition of reality in terms of impressions and feelings. The consciousness of things is for him a mere shadow of the things themselves. 'Mental elements' is merely a convenient phrase, the real elements being the physical elements. Accordingly, the self which is found in a permanent group of impressions and desires is not a final expression of the real self. The real self is the object which these impressions and desires represent, — that is to say, the physiological organism. The permanent identity of substance which lies at the basis of self-identity is an identity of body-material. And this means ultimately the permanent presence in the body of identical atoms of matter ; for to the hedonist and materialist, nothing but the individual atom is absolutely and permanently self-identical.

It is thus easy to understand why the hedonist attaches so little importance to personal identity. Even from the standpoint of consciousness it is clear that the group of impressions and feelings constituting the self is not an absolutely self-identical group. The image representing the body varies from year to year, and with it the nature of self-feeling ; so that it becomes doubtful whether much of the content of the self of youth is left in that of old age. And the same is true of the

substance of the body; it is probable that in the course of a normal lifetime there is a complete change several times over. Personal identity is, therefore, not different in principle from the identity of other mechanical objects and not more permanent or real. A human being, a chair, or a steam engine remains the same while its constituents remain the same, but no longer. The activity of all of them rests upon the same principle, that of gravitation, or of conservation of energy, the only difference between them being one of complexity. The conception of self-identity has consequently no more significance for one of these objects than for any other.

### 3. THE SELF OF IDEALISM

The idealistic conception of personal identity is teleological; self-identity is identity of purpose. This method of defining objects is, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> quite frequently applied to material objects. Thus, if I attempt to define a watch or a steam engine, it is usually more illuminating to state its purpose or function than the kind of material of which it is made or the arrangement of its parts. And as long as the same purpose is fulfilled, the object may be called the same, whatever changes have taken place in its material or its parts. A house may be called the same though every part of the original structure has been replaced by new material. But the purposes fulfilled by material objects are after all not their own but those of some conscious being to whom they are of value. As purposive realities they are consequently not independent realities but merely functions of some personal activity. Identity of purpose is, therefore, in its last analysis applicable only to personalities.

The idealistic conception of personal identity assumes, then, that human life is determined by a purpose. The human infant comes into the world equipped with a set of instinctive capacities. The peculiar character of each one's capacities determines his individual life purpose; the purpose is realised in

<sup>1</sup> p. 96.

their consistent and harmonious expression in the form of activity. Just what these capacities are, the child of course does not know, and may not find out until he has reached a relative maturity. He may be a born physician or a born artist, and may not clearly recognise the fact until he has tried several other professions and found them unsatisfactory and uninteresting. Nevertheless, according to idealistic theory, the impulse which has governed his professional activities and ambitions from the very beginning, and which led him to try even the uninteresting professions, was none other than that which finally found satisfactory expression in the profession last chosen. Each one of us aims to realise a specific purpose, — to live a certain kind of life ; we may not know just what our purpose is until we have made several unsatisfactory attempts to accomplish it ; but we are conscious all the while that our end is specific, and that we shall not be satisfied with any form of activity in which we merely happen to be successful. This means, in contrast to hedonistic theory, that our activity is not determined by environment. We do not wish to adjust ourselves to environment, in the sense of choosing that form of activity which requires the least effort and promises the greatest amount of ease and contentment, but are determined rather upon reorganising our environment so as to realise the form of life toward which our nature urges us. In a word, instead of conforming to environment, we are determined to make the environment conform to us.

From this it follows that self-activity is that which is controlled with reference to an end ; as such it may be contrasted with habitual activity. The characteristic of the latter is its uniformity and automatism. According to hedonism, the more uniform and automatic an activity, and the less it is subject to variation and control, the more truly it represents the real self. The real self in the hedonistic sense is that which comes out when one is off one's guard ; a form of behaviour which is carefully controlled — such, for example, as a man exhibits



to his guests rather than to his family — is relatively artificial. The contrast of standpoint is neatly illustrated in the phrase, *in vino veritas*, which means that the real man appears when he is intoxicated, and when, it is assumed, his prevailing tendencies and habits of thought assert themselves in all their brute strength, without reference to considerations of circumstance or fitness. The self of intoxication is the hedonistic self stripped naked. According to the idealistic conception a man is most truly himself when he is most sober, when he is most distinctly rational and reflective, and when his speech and action are most distinctly controlled with reference to carefully chosen ends. The self of intoxication is thus the poorest possible expression of the real man.

From this it follows also that self-interest is expressed in one's most mature choice rather than in the impulses that are mechanically the strongest or the most frequently aroused. We spend a large part of our time satisfying our bodily needs, but, according to idealistic theory, such satisfactions do not in themselves represent our ultimate purpose in life; they are at best but means to an end. So also a man whose tendencies are all toward literature may find it necessary to spend most of his life in commerce, or he may not arrive at an adequate appreciation of his real tastes and capacities until most of his life has been thus spent; nevertheless, it is not his most frequent occupation that expresses his real self, nor yet his most frequent expression of value, but that which represents his most mature judgment, — that occupation, in short, which he would take up if he were allowed to begin his life again. A man who has finally discovered an occupation that satisfies his tastes may consider that therein he expresses his real self, no matter how much of his life has been spent in activities widely different.

To say that our activity is most distinctly our own when it is most distinctly reflective and purposive is, however, only another way of saying that we are most distinctly ourselves



when we are most clearly conscious. In other words, the principle of self-identity and personality is the principle of consciousness as such. When the idealist claims for us the quality of personal identity, he means simply that we are conscious beings, or, if we like the phrase better, self-conscious beings; and that, as conscious beings, our activity rests upon a principle which is totally different from that which (apparently) governs the movements of mechanical objects. Or, again, when he says that human activity is governed by a purpose, he offers simply a more adequate expression of the meaning implied in Kant's view that human activity is 'rational,' both 'reason' and 'purpose' being intended to express the distinctive quality of consciousness. Hedonism, so far as it deals with consciousness at all, holds that consciousness is not purposive. The forces determining the direction of our thought and activity are the same as those determining the movements of mechanical objects. Their mode of action may be illustrated in the advice said to have been given by the late Cardinal Newman, "Preach the Trinity, and you will believe in the Trinity." In other words, practise a given form of action, and you will inevitably tend not only to make it a fixed habit of action but to believe firmly in the object which your action presupposes. Now according to idealistic theory, this combination of automatism with conscious belief and valuation is impossible. To take a simpler illustration, if the individual movements involved in tying my cravat are completely automatic, they are also completely unconscious. If I become conscious of the operation, it is because its uniformity and automatism are not absolute; the movement has encountered some obstacle for which it was not prepared. And conversely, where consciousness is present, the activity cannot be purely uniform and automatic. And, indeed, in those cases where uniformity and automatism are desirable, as in tying one's cravat, consciousness of the movement tends to produce an undesirable disturbance. I cannot be aware of what my hands are doing without attempting to control them. The same is

true of the formation of a habit ; repetition will not produce its mechanical result if consciousness be present. To be aware of the formation of a tendency is inevitably to pass judgment upon it and to control it with reference to some desirable end. If the result of judgment is approval, the tendency becomes fixed at once. And when truth and desirability are once established, no extent of repetition can be said to increase their amount—except, indeed, where further repetition brings to light factors hitherto noticed, in which case it is not a mere repetition. And so, to recur to our first illustration, if I make a practice of repeating certain phrases with regard to the Trinity without inquiring into their meaning, I may perhaps form a fixed habit of repeating them, but the process is not conscious, and the result is not belief. So far as my first sermon is the result of careful inquiry, and expresses a clear consciousness of belief, I do not need any further sermons to strengthen my conviction. So far as the first sermon is a relatively unconscious and uncritical aggregation of conventional phrases, repetition, if it have any effect upon consciousness, will serve only to bring to light any inconsistencies that the phrases may contain. Accordingly, the idealistic theory insists upon a fundamental distinction between consciousness and mechanical automatism ; so far as activity is conscious it is not automatic, and so far as it is automatic it is not conscious. And since the human being is fundamentally conscious, his activity is fundamentally rational and purposive, and rests upon a principle wholly incompatible with that which is supposed to determine the movements of mechanical objects.

#### 4. SELF AND SELF-REALISATION

From this analysis of self-consciousness and personality we may obtain an idea of what is meant by self-realisation. The realisation of self is the realisation of the purpose implied in the capacities of one's nature. Every man is fitted to carry out some particular form of activity, to realise some particular

purpose, to perform some particular function in the social organism. His duty is to find out what his capacities are, and to bend all his energies toward their special realisation. If, for example, his special tastes and aptitudes are in the direction of art, or of science, or of mechanical construction, or of administration of public affairs, it is his duty, in the choice of profession, to select his own particular form of activity, and to endeavour to establish himself in it without asking which offers the greatest material return. His attitude will then be the reverse of the hedonistic attitude, which looks upon a profession merely as a means of earning a livelihood. But a man's capacities are not all expressed in the choice of profession. They cover also his family life, his choice of friends, his appreciations of literature and art. In all of these regions he is to aim at complete self-development without regard to the ease or difficulty attending the process of realisation or to the promised return in terms of animal contentment. Thus, his choice of a wife will represent the demands of a complete personal sympathy rather than of wealth or of mere sexual satisfaction; and his choice of books, of music, and of plays, will be an expression of his literary and artistic ideals rather than of a desire for a pleasant form of recreation. His life as a whole will be an attempt to attain a complete, perfect, and harmonious expression of all his several capacities.

#### 5. SELF-REALISATION AND PLEASURE

We come now to a difficulty which will require a further definition of purpose and a more radical distinction from pleasure. It is probable that one who has followed our analysis thus far will assent to the distinction between a purposive and a purely mechanical activity, and will also admit that the tendency toward happiness, as conceived by hedonism, is ultimately a purely mechanical tendency. From this it follows of course that, if our activities are determined by a purpose, they are not determined by happiness; and that happiness, or

the greatest sum of happiness, cannot, therefore, be made the object of a purposive activity. But here it may seem that our reasoning has deceived us. At first sight the antithesis between happiness and purpose seems altogether unnecessary. For why may a man not make it his purpose in life to secure the greatest quantity of happiness? In short, is there any real opposition between the two theories of conduct? May we not, by a careful and purposive direction of our activity toward happiness as an end, fulfil at once the demands of both? And in fact is this not precisely what hedonism commands us to do? To meet this very obvious difficulty, let us look more closely at the distinction between pleasure and purpose.

A purposive activity may be described as an organic activity. Now an organism, or an organic unity, is an object whose individual parts or aspects are so related to each other that, when the object acts as a whole, it acts in all its parts, and when it receives benefit or injury as a whole, it also receives benefit or injury in every part,—in which, consequently, the value of an object or activity for any part is its value for the whole, and conversely. There are no cases to be found of complete organic unity. The human body is the most complete illustration. In contrast to mechanical objects, and even to some of the lower forms of life, the mutual relation of its parts is such that, generally speaking, if one be destroyed or removed, the body as a whole is destroyed. If the crank shaft of a locomotive break, it may be easily replaced, and the locomotive made as good as before. If an earthworm be cut into two, both parts will continue to live. But if a human body be cut into two, both parts are dead; and, generally speaking, if any organ be removed, the body as a whole is destroyed; and, further, if any organ be diseased, the body as a whole is diseased. In short, each part of the body is nothing without the whole, the whole is nothing without all the parts.

A purposive activity shows the same relations. Each step in the activity acquires its value from the activity as a whole,

and the value of the activity as a whole depends upon each step. The several factors of a purposive act are thus related to each other in the same manner as the several organs in the body. If I make a journey to New York to fulfil an appointment, no part of the journey has any value unless the whole be accomplished. If I am preparing for a profession, no part of the preparation has any value except as it is to be employed in the activities of the profession. If my life as a whole is the realisation of a purpose, no part of my life has any value except as the purpose is thereby realised.

Now it is the assumption of an organic unity of activity which gives the self of the future a lien upon the self of the present. It is this only which constitutes an intelligible motive for considering the demands of the future. If my present activity is a preparation for a profession, then I have a sufficient motive for making now whatever efforts and sacrifices the necessities of the profession demand. Whatever motive I have for engaging in the work of preparation at all is a motive which applies with equal force to the demands of the future and to those of the present. If my activity is not organic and purposive, there is no motive whatever for making any sacrifice of present comfort and convenience.

When we consider the possibility of choosing happiness as an end, we find that it does not meet these conditions. A life devoted to pleasure is not an organic unity. It is rather an amorphous mass, like a heap of sand, every grain of which is just as much itself when away from the others as when with them. Every thrill of pleasure has its own value without regard to any other state of pleasure or of pain. A debauch may be followed by a headache, and I may say that the pain of the headache is greater than the pleasure of the debauch; but this does not make the latter in itself any the less pleasant or valuable. In a word, each thrill of pleasure, like each grain of sand or atom of matter, is an independent mathematical quantity; and a lifetime of pleasure, like a heap of sand, is a

mathematical sum of independent units, a formless aggregate which is not more complete at one point than at another. From the standpoint of happiness, a life which ends at seventy has realised nothing more than a life which ends at thirty.

No, you may say, something more has been realised, — namely, a greater sum total of happiness. But when you reflect upon it, you find that a sum total of happiness is something which cannot be realised<sup>1</sup> and which, therefore, cannot constitute a purpose. For where is the sum of happiness when it is complete? In other words, what is accomplished, what difference exists in actual conditions, at the end of a long period of happiness rather than at the end of a shorter? When a purpose is being realised, each step in the activity brings us nearer the establishment of the end; and when the end is established, the conditions are different from what they were in the beginning. In some way life has been improved. Even if life is cut off in the middle, a certain progress has been made that will enable another to carry the purpose to completion. But in the sum of pleasure all that exists at any moment is the pleasure of that moment. The past pleasures have had their day and passed out of existence, and the future pleasures have not yet arrived. In the last of a series of states of pleasure all that exists is the pleasure of that state alone; and when the series is completed, nothing has been accomplished above what existed at the beginning. In a word, a sum total of pleasure is something which as such never really exists, and which cannot, therefore, be realised. Hence, it cannot be an object for a purposive activity.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason happiness furnishes no ground for self-sacrifice, — that is to say, with happiness as the motive, the sacrifice of the present good to the greater good of the future becomes

<sup>1</sup> Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, pp. 87 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (3d ed.), pp. 234 ff.; and for the contrary view, see Sidgwick's reply to Green, *Methods of Ethics* (4th ed.), p. 134. See also Alexander's discussion of this point, *Moral Order and Progress*, pp. 196 ff.



psychologically inconceivable. Remembering the emphasis which hedonism places upon prudential calculation, remembering too that in modern times this school has been the special champion of the duty of calculation, in opposition to the intuitional advocacy of a blind obedience to conscience, this may at first sight appear paradoxical. But a moment's consideration will show it to be true. The hedonist, while claiming that the reasonableness of exerting myself for the benefit of others requires explanation, is accustomed to hold that the wisdom of providing for my own future is self-evident. But it would seem that the rationality of self-sacrifice must in both cases rest upon the same ground. Exertion for the good of others, though involving an apparent sacrifice of my own good, must be shown really to increase it; and similarly, the good of the future, though demanding an apparent sacrifice of the present, must be shown really to increase the good of the present itself. If the good be the pleasure, the latter proposition, at least, must be false; for the happiness of the present is diminished rather than increased by consideration of the future. In those cases where thought for the future is necessary — where present happiness is clearly at variance with future happiness — I should certainly be happier in the present if I could dismiss all thought for the future. Why, then, I may ask, should I take thought for the morrow? What claim has the morrow upon the present, that it may demand a sacrifice of the present? On the basis of happiness alone there appears to be no answer;<sup>1</sup> evidently any claim which the morrow may have upon the present presupposes that they are in some way related, — in other words, it presupposes some kind of personal identity. And, if we insist upon the self-evident rationality of considering one's own future, but question the rationality of considering the welfare of others, it is evident that personal identity of some kind is already assumed; the self of the present and the self of the future are in some way more closely related than I and another

✧ <sup>1</sup> See Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, pp. 129 ff.



person. But it is also evident that the introduction of personal identity modifies the statement of the end. The greatest sum of happiness is not now happiness in bulk — happiness which may be indifferently my own or another's, of the present or of the future — but happiness as the realisation of an ideally proportioned human life. It appears, then, that mere happiness is unable to hold the different phases of an individual life together in a consistent unity of purpose. When the hedonist calls happiness an end, he necessarily presupposes a basis of personal identity, and when this presupposition is made, the end is no longer mere happiness.

It is instructive to note that, in the naïve use of the terms 'pleasure' and 'purpose' their mutual contradiction is quite clearly implied. For common sense 'the man of pleasure' is the direct antithesis of 'the man with a purpose'; a 'pleasure-loving person' is synonymous with a thoughtless person; a life given to pleasure is a life given up to the impulses of the moment, — a life without plan or purpose. And when we say of the lower animals that they are actuated only by pleasure and pain, what we have in mind is clearly absence of foresight. In every case pleasure means a surrender to the impulses of the moment, a renunciation of purpose, activity, and effort. A state of feeling is pleasurable to the extent that effort is absent, — to the extent that the present is undisturbed by doubts or scruples with regard to future consequences. The quintessence of pleasure is the languorous, dreamy state pictured in the Oriental paradise; it finds its most complete expression in the Nirvana of Oriental philosophy, — a condition in which, all human ambitions and purposes having been dismissed as vain and empty, one has arrived at a state of final and complete absorption into an eternal present.

It is to be noted, finally, that though hedonists very commonly speak of pleasure as constituting the purpose of life, the opposition of pleasure and purpose is entirely in accord with the more careful expression of hedonistic theory.

(a) It is true that the hedonist, in his discussion of pleasure, speaks of it commonly as the end, the motive, or the purpose of conduct; but here, as I have pointed out before, he is simply accommodating himself to the conveniences of language, — an accommodation which every one who discusses the subject will find it advisable to make. In reality, however, he is not thinking of motives and purposes as such. Motive and purpose is the language of subjective feeling, and for hedonism the subjective standpoint has no ultimate significance. What the hedonist has in mind is not the purpose of conduct but its *cause*. Now the cause of my preference of the future greater pleasure lies proximately in an association of ideas, — for example, in an unpremeditated intrusion of the thought of future want into the present state of enjoyment, which renders the present less agreeable in itself and hence less immediately attractive. The ultimate ground of this association process is to be found in the cerebral process corresponding to the association in question and in the complex of physiological and physical conditions by which its character is determined. The preference of the future greater pleasure is, therefore, not in any real sense a matter of purpose and foresight but, on the contrary, merely the cumulative mechanical result of the many past conditions in which undue indulgence in the present was followed by future want.

(b) A completely hedonistic life — a life which finally realised the demands of an absolute maximum of happiness, and in which, consequently, every action from birth to death represented an accurate adjustment to such demands — would be a life in which purpose had no longer a place. We are apt to think of such a life as one that is full of purposeful industry in its earlier years, the fruits of which are enjoyed later; it is the life of the man of business who bends all his energies toward the accumulation of a fortune which he afterward retires to enjoy. But this is not the conception offered by scientific hedonism. According to hedonism, the perfectly adjusted life

is automatic and self-regulating ; it is the expression of a final and absolute equilibrium between the conditions of happiness and the actions which produce happiness ; it means that the process of association is finally complete, that the conditions of happiness in the future have so worked themselves into the present that undue indulgence in the present is no longer felt to be pleasant. A life of this kind contains from its very beginning no temptation to act in a manner prejudicial to the future ; hence, there is no occasion for thought of the future. To the extent that such thought is necessary, or possible, it means that the adjustment is not yet complete, that the causes which lead men to prefer the maximum of happiness are not yet fully efficacious, — in other words, that causes antagonistic to happiness are still at work. Accordingly, a perfectly automatic and self-regulating life would not be one in which all the enjoyment were postponed to the latter half, but one in which a due measure of happiness were enjoyed throughout.<sup>1</sup>

The conception of a life automatically regulated may be roughly illustrated by a comparison of the attitude of the typi-

<sup>1</sup> The following question arises : Granting that the man of business who hopes to retire in order to enjoy the fortune he has made is not yet completely adjusted to the conditions of a maximum of happiness, have we not nevertheless in this case a purposive activity with happiness as its end ? It seems not. The case as thus conceived is probably not an actual one. It will be found that men who are so strongly in love with happiness and contentment as to make them the purpose of their life have never the energy of purpose which enables one to work for a result not to be realised until after many years ; also that men who will sacrifice everything for a fortune are usually unwilling to retire when the supposed purpose of their activity has been accomplished. This seems to show that the purpose was not after all the enjoyment of wealth, but a successful career. If enjoyment were the end, a man who had inherited a sufficient fortune should be willing to give up the thought of an occupation and to begin at twenty the kind of existence which he would otherwise begin at fifty or sixty ; but the man we have in mind would rarely be content with the mere enjoyment of a fortune. All his impulses lead him to do something and make a success of it ; and the happiness which he expects to enjoy at retirement (supposing that he is looking forward to enjoyment) is not happiness as such, not the enjoyment of mere leisure and security, but the consciousness of having achieved success in his life occupation.

cal German youth with that of the typical American youth. The American confidently expects to make a fortune; the German is not so hopeful, and often would prefer an appointment under the government, with its moderate but secure income, to the responsibility of caring for a fortune. The American ideal is to forego every pleasure of youth in order, by a painful industry and economy, to attain ultimately a brilliant success; the German is industrious and certainly economical, but he believes that as a young man he ought to enjoy the pleasures of youth. He is, therefore, comparatively unwilling to carry his industry and economy to the point of hardship. He does not entirely neglect the future, but he suffers no feverish anxiety with regard to it. In a word, his life is, comparatively speaking, automatically regulated. He works and he saves, but both are moderated, and he finds a certain immediate satisfaction and contentment in a regulated daily activity and in a regular increase of his savings which is denied to those who are constantly thinking of the ends for which they are working and saving. To the extent that genuine purposiveness is absent and automatism is present he realises both the hedonistic conception of an equilibrium and the hedonistic demand for a maximum of happiness.

#### 6. SELF-REALISATION AND RATIONALISM

We may now conclude our analysis of self-realisation with a brief comparison of this theory with that of Kant. Both, we have seen, are attempts to state the distinguishing characteristics of a conscious, or self-conscious being. For Kant he is a 'rational' being; as such his typical mode of activity is a consistent adherence to principle; his rule of conduct is the categorical imperative, which means, when translated into the language of common sense, "Let your conduct be constantly determined by principle." But Kant's conception of a rational being is that of a merely 'reasoning' being, as reasoning is conceived by formal logic. The Kantian rational being is, in fact, the personi-

fication of the syllogism. As such he is indifferent to the nature of his conclusions, provided only that they are deduced without contradiction from his premises; he is indifferent to the ends attained by his conduct, provided only that his conduct be self-consistent. But a being of this kind is clearly not a psychological reality. As a merely reasoning being, he is without motive for activity, without good or evil, and without moral character; in short, he lacks most of the characteristics which make up a self-conscious being. Now it is these missing characteristics which the theory of self-realisation aims to supply. The rational being is now conceived as not merely a reasoner, but an agent. He is not impartial with regard to his premises, nor indifferent with regard to the ends to be achieved, but, on the contrary, distinctly prejudiced in favour of those ends which are implied in his fundamental tendencies and capacities. These constitute the premises of his reasoning, and their systematic and consistent realisation constitutes the rational process. The rational being is thus converted into a being with desires and motives, with possibilities of choice and action, of good and evil. As such he becomes a concrete psychological reality, — a self-conscious and moral agent. His activity is still a consistent adherence to principle; but adherence to principle is no longer a mere exercise of consistency for consistency's sake, but the consistent realisation of a concrete purpose.

With the introduction of the conception of purpose the idealistic theory becomes also an evolutionary theory. An evolutionary conception is, of course, not what we expect from Kant. And, indeed, in his conception of a rational being the possibility of evolution appears to be positively excluded. The ideal 'rational' life is like the ideal hedonistic life, — a condition of unbroken equilibrium. The reason is like the governor on the steam engine. The governor regulates rather than directs; it does not determine the activities of the engine toward any particular end, but simply maintains a *status quo* of uniform speed. So the 'reason' of the rational being simply

holds his activity in a uniform condition of self-consistency, and thus excludes the conception of growth. But when we translate reason into purpose, we obtain a conception of rationality in which reason is capable of evolution. The activity of the rational being no longer shows a merely uniform consistency, but an ever increasing consistency. Each later stage in a purposive life exhibits, as compared with an earlier, a clearer and more definite conception of the life purpose and a more effective coördination of activities toward its realisation, — in other words, a growth in self-consciousness and self-control. But the process of evolution did not begin with the individual ; on the contrary, his own growth is simply a continuation of a process previously at work in his ancestors. If, then, the activities of the adult are a development of the purpose of the infant, those of the generation must in turn be a development of the purpose of the race ; and, further, the life of the race as a whole must be the development of the purpose implied in animal life as such. We thus extend the conception of purposive activity to cover, first, the evolution of the human race ; and finally (leaving aside its possible extension to inanimate nature) the evolution of animal life in general.

The chief exponent of the theory of self-realisation is Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*. For other literature, see Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, Book II, ch. i ; Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*, Part I, ch. iii ; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay ii ; Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics* (3d ed.), pp. 234 ff.

See also Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*, for a form of theory which endeavours to unite, in "a theory which conceives of conduct as the normal and free living of life as it is," the demands both of idealism and hedonism. Leslie Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, and Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*, represent a similar standpoint.



## CHAPTER XII

### IDEALISTIC SOCIAL THEORY

OUR next duty is to define the idealistic conception of social relations and the consequent conception of social duty. We shall find it convenient to proceed as before from the conception of self. This conception, we have seen, must be defined so as to answer two questions: (1) What makes me the same to-day as I was yesterday? (2) What distinguishes me from other persons? The first question having been the subject of the last chapter, the second will occupy us here. Inasmuch, however, as distinction always implies relation, the principle which distinguishes individual selves must also determine their relations. The question may then be more fully stated as follows: what is it that distinguishes different individuals and also determines their reciprocal relations?

#### 1. THE HEDONISTIC INDIVIDUAL AND THE HEDONISTIC SOCIETY

It will be convenient to begin, as before, with the hedonistic answer to our question. The hedonistic theory of social relations was outlined in chapter v. Our duty now is to trace the connection between this theory of society and the hedonistic conception of self as defined in our last chapter.

Since the self of hedonism is the human body, it follows of course that individual selves are distinguished in the same manner as all other material objects, that is to say, by differences of spatial position. This means, then, that two individual persons are as separate, distinct, and independent as two billiard balls. Now not only does their separateness and inde-



pendence rest upon their physical character but upon no other basis could it be asserted. If we think of two individuals as two series of states of consciousness, *i.e.* as two minds rather than two bodies, it may, and indeed must happen, that certain terms in the two series are identical; for example, Peter and Paul may both perceive the same chair, or hold the same political or religious views. But so far as the two minds are identical in content, how can they be two? Two billiard balls, identical in quality, both being red, spherical, and of the same size, are two if they occupy different portions of space; if they occupy the same space they are one. But spatial distinctions have no application to states of consciousness. Two such states are not located in different brains, as popular psychology tends to assume; and if their content is identical in quality, they have no other distinguishable features. Hence, they are not two, but one, — more properly, they have no numerical quality whatever. It is true that we often speak of Peter's perception of a chair and Paul's simultaneous perception of the same chair as if they were two perceptions; but what we have in mind here is not so much the duality of mental states as that of the physiological and nervous systems which, as common sense tells us, are in some way connected with the act of perception. The difficulty of separating individuals is even greater when we think of consciousness as essentially purposive. For two purposes with the same end in view are clearly not distinguishable. When Peter and Paul form a partnership for the transaction of business, even popular thought refuses any longer to distinguish their respective activities. So far, then, as human beings are conscious and purposive, they are not wholly separate and independent individuals; if we are to think of them as such, we must restrict ourselves to the hedonistic conception of self and define the human being as a bodily organism.

The interests of human beings conceived as animal bodies are of necessity mutually invidious; one man's gain is another's loss. Peter and Paul cannot both eat the same apple. They

may both sleep in the same bed and may both hear the same concert, but in doing so each prevents some less fortunate individual from occupying his place ; for it never happens that there is a sufficient quantity of material goods and accommodations to satisfy the needs of all. If Peter's self were not wholly identical with his body, and if his interests were, therefore, not concentrated upon the welfare of that body, it is easily conceivable that he should find a greater satisfaction in giving up his bed to Paul. But since, as hedonism implies, he is wholly identical with his body, it is his interest and his duty to reserve his bed for himself and to prevent any one else from occupying it.<sup>1</sup>

The subjective counterpart of bodily interest is the desire for pleasure ; hence it follows that interest in pleasure is such also as to provoke a conflict of interests. When we speak of aiming at pleasure, we distinguish between the results of our activity considered in themselves and the amount of pleasant *feeling* they will produce in us. This feeling is the effect produced by the results in question upon the bodily organism. Now the more widely this effect is distributed, the less will be the intensity with which it is produced in any one person. The greater the number of persons who share the apple, the less will be the enjoyment of each. This is true also of pleasures much more complex than those of eating. Suppose, for example, that a village community has acquired a public library. No doubt every one concerned enjoys a certain amount of pleasure upon its completion ; but the pleasure of each is greater to the extent that the library is in some sense his own. Let us suppose that the library is the gift of a wealthy citizen. If his interests are not confined to those of his own body and its feelings, he may find a sufficient satisfaction in the thought that the library is in existence and that human objects in general are thereby advanced ; in this case it would be quite as satisfactory if the library had been the gift of another. But as a hedonistic in-

<sup>1</sup> pp. 83, 84.

dividual he is interested only in the pleasurable feeling which the object causes in himself. And this feeling is intensified to the extent that the object is exclusively his own. To the extent that he shares with others this consciousness of authorship, *e.g.* to the extent that he is merely one of many contributors, the intensity of his pleasure is diminished. Pleasant feeling is thus necessarily invidious; the pleasure enjoyed by one is denied to others.

This conception of the individual accounts for the hedonistic conception of society. Since the several individuals are so many separate and independent realities, society is a mere aggregate or sum of the several individual units composing it, — not in any sense a unity. And since the interests of the several individuals are in mutual conflict, social organisation expresses merely a compromise between hostile forces, — not in any sense a harmony of interests. In this compromise no one is completely satisfied; it means merely that each consents to abandon some of his original claims to secure a similar sacrifice on the part of others. Thus social activity is like the movements of the balls on the billiard table. Each individual is separate from the other; the coming together is a collision of opposing forces; and the final position of each is a resultant of the force with which he threw himself into the conflict compounded with those forces which he encountered.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. THE IDEALISTIC INDIVIDUAL

The idealistic self is the purpose or ideal which is assumed to be the ultimate source or motive of my activity. Accordingly, my individual personality will be distinguishable from that of others only to the extent that our purposes or ideals are distinguishable. Now when I attempt to define my life purpose, I find that it has by no means the definiteness of boundary line which is found in the lines marking the limits of my individual body. It is clear that self-consciousness is progressive. The

<sup>1</sup> p. 93.

child's or the youth's knowledge of himself is far less complete than that of the mature man. But even the latter never completely knows himself; for as long as life continues — at any rate as long as he remains in possession of his powers — there is a constant reformulation of ideals and purposes, a constant extension and completion of their meaning. For a conscious being maturity of purpose and of self is never really complete. The process of growth is of course brought to a stop by death; but this need not mean that the possibilities of growth have been exhausted, or that all the capacities of one's nature have found expression. To these capacities and possibilities we can assign no absolute limit.

Now according to the idealistic theory, the self in its development in self-consciousness soon expands beyond the boundaries of bodily self-seeking; in its subsequent development it tends constantly to find a greater satisfaction in social than in exclusively individual ends; and in its complete development it would be wholly identical with the self or mind of society. The clearest cases of bodily self-seeking are to be found in the actions of the young child. This does not mean of course that the child is actuated by no more generous impulses, but merely that, as compared with older persons, he attaches a greater importance to the satisfactions of appetite; the surest road to his favour is a present of candy or cake. As a young man his ideals are still to a large extent coloured by bodily self-seeking, though the reference to the body is less direct. They now take the form of 'success'; and success means accumulation of wealth, political and social distinction, and the power to control the actions of his fellows. When, however, as a mature man he finds himself in the full exercise of business or profession, he discovers that the occupation has a certain intrinsic interest independent of its advantage to himself; and though the profession has been adopted with the avowed motive of individual advantage, he soon finds a larger attraction in the activity itself. In short, the agent's interests have broadened, and with the broadening

of interest there comes an enlargement of the original self. The same occurs when, as a father of family, he finds himself forgetting his bodily self in his interest in his wife and children; or when, as a citizen or householder, he develops an active interest in social and political problems; or when, in his reading, or in social intercourse, he finds himself in larger fields of thought and expression. Every advance in maturity brings to light capacities of appreciation of which he was hitherto unaware. But each further development of capacity for appreciation is also a further development of social sympathy; it means a constantly widening identity of interest between self and others, and therefore a constantly increasing identity of self with other selves. Such is the idealistic view of the development of the individual self. According to this view, then, a completely developed individual—one in whom all latent capacities had been brought to actual expression—would be completely identical with the self or mind of society. This would mean, in other words, that if Peter and Paul were completely self-conscious, their interests and their selves would be absolutely harmonious and identical; they would be no longer two persons, but one.

Thus the many individuals composing the race are not really many, but one, and their interests are not in conflict, but in harmony. To this we must add that their real interest is not in the enjoyment of feeling, but in the attainment of objects. Feeling, we must remember, is the effect produced by a set of conditions upon the body; therefore, to the extent that the self transcends the bodily self we cannot be said to be interested in feeling. In this case, it might be said, we are interested in the 'feelings of others.' But such is not the idealistic view. Social interest, in the idealistic sense, is not a mere extension of bodily self-seeking to include the bodily interests of others. Social values are not mere summations of individual feeling values; on the contrary, the socially minded person ignores all considerations of feeling whatever, and thinks nei-

ther of his own pleasure nor of that of others. The best illustration of the social motive as conceived by idealism is to be found in the activities of art and science, which are very commonly spoken of to-day as distinctly social activities.<sup>1</sup> The true artist, we are agreed, is he who ignores all considerations of self, as represented in the demand for fame or for profit, in his devotion to his art. But this does not mean that in his self-forgetfulness he is thinking of others. On the contrary, as a true artist, he abstracts from all considerations of personal feeling; he is as little regardful of others' fame and profit as of his own; he is unsparing in his criticism of his own work, but equally relentless in criticising the work of others; he is untroubled by any regard for a 'fair distribution' of praise and blame; in a word, he is not interested, nor does he conceive others to be interested, in any object but that of the successful realisation of artistic ends. His 'social' interest is thus an intrinsic interest in the objects themselves. Such is the motive which, according to idealism, distinguishes social seeking from self-seeking;<sup>2</sup> it is an interest in the intrinsic value of his work which distinguishes the statesman from the politician, the physician from the quack, and the workman from the wage-earner.

It may be objected that, since all values depend upon the relation of the object to human desire and need, 'intrinsic values' are inconceivable. To this the idealist would reply that he does not conceive the values of objects to be unrelated to human desires. Every sort of value for human beings must have its ground in the nature of their desires and tendencies. But according to idealistic theory the fundamental human tendency is not an instinct for enjoyment but an instinct for activity, and its satisfaction is to be found not in its reflex emotional effect but in the economy and effectiveness with which it attains its object. This motive has been neatly characterised

<sup>1</sup> On this point see Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, p. 204. ✕

<sup>2</sup> On the intrinsic character of social values see Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, ✕ (3d ed.), pp. 252 ff.



by Mr. Veblen as 'the instinct of workmanship.'<sup>1</sup> It is a common instinct of workmanship, a common demand for the efficient development of human activities and for the attainment of the ends of humanity as such—as distinguished from a separate demand on the part of each for individual enjoyment—which, according to idealistic theory, constitutes the basis of social sympathy.

Guided by this subjective view of the individual self, the idealist is led to deny that the bodily selves are, after all, as separate and independent as hedonism assumes. A real independence and separateness would require not only that the several bodies be capable of independent movement but that they be individually and independently self-sustaining. But this condition is never quite realised. It is least realised in the relations of mother and child. Before the child is born he is in every sense a part of the body of the mother; and even after birth some time must elapse before the two are in any sense independent, for the function of nursing is as necessary to the complete welfare of the mother as to that of the child. There is a similar relation of interdependence between the sexes. It is clear that no sexual organism can be individually complete; the demands of health, if nothing more, require that it be not permanently separated from the opposite sex. But the relations which we find here are only to a degree more binding than those which exist between men in general. It is immediately evident that, in our modern life at least, men are not individually self-sustaining. Each one of us depends for his daily food upon an immeasurably wide range of social activities. The loaf of bread on my table is from wheat grown by some unknown farmer perhaps a thousand miles away; its presence here is due to the organised efforts of a large army of railway officers, engineers, firemen, track-walkers, etc., and a failure on the part of any one of these to perform his duty might easily have deprived me, or some one else, of his

<sup>1</sup> *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, by Thorstein Veblen, pp. 93 ff.



loaf of bread. On the other hand, every one of them is in some degree dependent upon me for his support. But even this does not express the whole extent of our human interdependence. We require not only the services of others but their presence and sympathy. A long term of solitary confinement or of solitary existence upon a deserted island means almost inevitably a loss of reason (and with it all the qualities that distinguish a human being), and a decrease of health and vitality. In view of these facts, the idealist asks whether men are in any sense individually separate and independent. Would an isolated human being be in any sense human? Would he be able to exist at all?<sup>1</sup>

The idealistic theory of the essential unity of the race is further illustrated in the relations of heredity. We grant of course that the individual is not independent of his ancestors, but from our habit of tracing ancestry only through the male line we are apt to think of each individual as the product of a narrow line of ancestry. A moment's reflection will show us that this conception is false. Each of us has two parents; each of our parents had also two parents; hence, if we are to include all of those whose nature we inherit, we shall find the number of our ancestors doubled for every generation we go backward, and a simple calculation will show that only a few centuries back they must have been many thousands. The individual is, therefore, not the last member of a *line* of ancestry, but the apex of a pyramid whose base doubles in size with each more distant generation. This theoretical result is modified, of course, by a certain amount of intermarriage; and in isolated communities it may be found that nearly all the inhabitants owe their descent, through repeated intermarriages, to a few families. But no community has been indefinitely isolated; at some time in the past its ancestors have formed a part of a larger community, and this in turn has received

<sup>1</sup> On the interdependence of individuals, see Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, pp. 152 ff.

an influx of blood from other communities and races. The individual is the heir, therefore, not of a restricted line of ancestry but of practically the whole human race. Any of his ancestors may have been responsible for his individual characteristics. Usually, indeed, he chiefly resembles his immediate parents; but the facts of atavism show that he may inherit from remoter ancestors characteristics which have failed to appear in the intervening generations; and when we remember the enormous complexity of the individual character as it is actually exhibited, it becomes not improbable that every one of the ancestors has to some degree contributed to its formation. The individual is the heir, then, of practically all the capacities which have ever existed in the race. Some of these come to light in his individual actions, but every one of them is inherent in his character and probably capable of transmission to his descendants. But not only is he the heir of all the race in the past; he is also the parent of all the race to come. His name, indeed, may be lost in a few generations, through the extinction of the male line; but his blood, *i.e.* his nature, is likely to be diffused ultimately throughout the whole of the race. Now when we look at the individual in the light of these relations, he becomes, on the one hand, no longer an independent individual but merely a phase in the evolution of the race; but since he contains in his nature all the capacities of humanity, and in turn transmits those capacities to all the coming race, he becomes, on the other hand, identical with the race itself, and the evolution of the race becomes simply the development of his own individual nature. If, now, we think of human evolution as the working out of a purpose, the realisation of the race purpose appears to be nothing more than the complete self-realisation of each individual, — such, in other words, as he would demand if he were completely self-conscious and completely aware of all the capacities contained in him.

## 3. THE IDEALISTIC CONCEPTION OF INDIVIDUALITY

Keeping in mind the nature of race identity, we may now understand the idealistic conception of 'individuality.' An idealist cannot, of course, overlook the distinction of individuals; he denies only that they are separate and independent. The individual, in the idealistic sense, is the organised expression of special functions and capacities. We shall see presently what is meant by 'function'; for the present it will mean that in each individual certain generic tendencies are emphasised, certain others are relatively disregarded. Why this should be the case — in other words, why the individual with the capacities of the whole race inherent in him should express himself more positively in some of them than in others — is one of the ultimate problems for an idealistic philosophy. Immediately, however, it is evident that some specialisation is demanded by the material conditions under which we live. For example, you are a mechanical engineer and I a biologist. It is clear that, since each is capable of only a limited range of attention and of a limited amount of work, each must limit the extent of his activities in order to accomplish any satisfactory results. This does not mean that the interests of each are limited to the range of his activity. On the contrary, according to idealism, each as a human being is interested in the pursuits of the other. For I am not a biologist only, but a human being, and as such I find in mechanical problems that attraction which they possess to an extent for all human beings. The special activity of each is thus to some extent a realisation of the ends of the other. Accordingly, though individuality involves a specialisation of interests, yet such specialisation is not inconsistent with a fundamental identity of interests; it is rather, in view of the existing conditions, a more effective method for the realisation of our common ends.

But individuality does not mean mere specialisation, but *organised* specialisation. It is the perfection of one's organisa-

tion, the clearness and definition of one's interests, which marks the degree of one's individuality. It is only the highly organised individual who can be said to have any special interests, or, for that matter, any real interests whatever. And so, according to the idealistic conception, that organisation of capacity which marks the growth of self-consciousness is a development not only of social sympathy but of individuality. As compared with man the lower animals show a lower degree of organisation and of self-consciousness; each member of a species has also a much less marked individuality. And the child shows less individuality than the man.

#### 4. THE IDEALISTIC SOCIETY

The idealistic conception of society has already been analysed with some fulness in our analysis of the individual. It may be well, however, to make a special statement of its general features. Briefly expressed, the idealistic society is an organism. In the last chapter I offered a definition of an organism,<sup>1</sup> and it was noted there that the best illustration of the organic principle is to be found in the human body, in which, approximately, the health of every member depends upon the health of the whole, and the health of the whole upon the health of every member. Now according to idealistic theory, not only is society an organism but it is the only real organism in existence. This point cannot be too strongly emphasised. The phrase 'social organism' is a very common one, but our use of it is frequently metaphorical. We think of social relations as *analogous* to those found within the parts of the individual body, but it remains usually a mere analogy, since the only relations that we think of as truly organic are the physiological relations, the social relations being only figuratively such. For idealism, however, the relation of analogy is, if anything, reversed. The only complete unity is to be found in society as

<sup>1</sup> p. 199.

a whole ; the unity of functions in the individual body is in itself incomplete ; it is merely a phase abstracted from the real unity of society. In a word, the individual is merely a function in the social organism. He retains his life and health, and, for that matter, his humanity, only while he remains a member of society ; apart from society he would no longer be a human being, nor, indeed, a living being ; he is therefore, like his own heart and lungs, not a complete organism, but only a member of a larger organism. But here the analogy is to an extent misleading, for we tend to think of heart and lungs as to an extent subordinate in importance to the body as a whole, and we do not think of them as having any real *interests* whatever. This, an idealist would say, is because the body is not in any complete sense an organic unity. A complete organism must be conscious and purposive not only as a whole but in all its parts ; unless each member be conscious and purposive, unless also its purpose be that of the whole, it cannot be expected to realise that perfect adaptation to changing conditions which is required by the conception of function. These conditions will be realised, however, in the organic unity of society. In the idealistic society every member is conscious and purposive, and the purpose of each is absolutely and completely identical with the purpose of society as such. Hence, each individual, though but a function in the social organism, is not in any sense a subordinate part ; on the contrary, all are coördinate in the unity of interests constituting the organism.

Since society is the only complete organism, it is also the only complete personality. Here, as before, though we often speak of society as a personality, we tend to think of it as a mere analogy to the concrete individual personality. But for idealism the only real personality is society itself ; all individual persons, to the extent that they are mere individuals, are relative abstractions. The individual person as we know him is only a partial expression of his whole nature, realising but a small part of the capacities of appreciation and action inherent

in him. It is in his fellows, and in personal sympathy with them, that he is to realise his personality more completely. Each of them presents in his activity some further revelation of the human nature already inherent in the others. Consequently, if any individual be repressed or destroyed, the survivors lose by it some of the aspects of life necessary to a full expression of their own personality.

In its conception of a social organism the idealistic theory is to be distinguished from individualism on the one hand and from a mere collectivism on the other.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the emphasis which idealistic theories place upon freedom of self-activity and of self-development, they are sometimes condemned as expressions of pure individualism ;<sup>2</sup> it is claimed that they urge the individual to develop himself without any regard to the effects of his self-development upon the development of others. But this is hardly a correct interpretation of idealism. True, the idealist urges a man to develop himself, and, if we like, his individual self ; but he warns him at the same time that he will not find himself in any activities which bring him into antagonism with the real selves of others. Antagonism between men means that each fails fully to understand either himself or the others ; if all were completely self-conscious, they would be completely harmonious. The idealistic theory is, therefore, not an individualism in any proper sense. Individualism presupposes a fundamental antagonism of individual interests. In urging each to look out for himself, and in insisting, moreover, upon a clear field for a trial of strength, it frankly implies that the stronger is to enrich himself at the expense of the weaker, and at the same time it frankly accepts the consequences as a true expression of relative values.

Nor is the idealistic theory a mere collectivism. For mere collectivism presupposes, with individualism, an antagonism of individual interests ; and since all cannot be satisfied, we must award satisfaction to the larger interests (as estimated by capac-

<sup>1</sup> pp. 91, 92.

<sup>2</sup> This criticism is directed specially against Kant,



ity for enjoyment<sup>1</sup>) at the expense of the smaller. And these larger interests have not only the power but the *right* to demand the sacrifice. Extreme expressions of the demands of collectivism are to be found in some of the proposed systems of communism and state socialism. The present organisation of society is only partially communistic; we demand, for instance, that the owner of a lot in a certain residence district shall not erect a store upon it without the consent of the other property owners, but we do not go to the extent of allowing the others to dictate the style of residence to be built there, or to select its interior furnishings. In a truly communistic system, however, every act of the individual would be subject to the dictation of officials elected by the stronger party. These officials would assign to the individual his work, his food, his clothes, his books, and recreations, without consulting the individual taste except to the extent that it were in the interests of their party to do so; if it were found advisable, from the standpoint of their party, they could assign him to an unhealthful or dangerous occupation; or, for that matter, they could put him to death. Collectivism, in its extreme implication, is thus the complete inversion of idealism. According to idealism, the welfare of every member of the social organism is necessary to the welfare of the organism as such, while, on the other hand, each member finds his own good only in the social good.

The idealist conceives of society as a community of rational beings—or, in Kant's terminology, as a 'kingdom of ends.' Now a rational being obeys only his judgment of value; and an action is not rendered intrinsically more valuable or good by the fact that a penalty is attached to its non-performance. Therefore, among rational beings, coercion is ineffective. But, on the other hand, it is also unnecessary; for, as rational beings, men will do of their own accord what they conceive to be reasonable. As a rational being each member of society demands full opportunity for self-expression, nor, indeed, can

<sup>1</sup> pp. 87 ff.

he act at all except along lines that express himself; but the demands of all members of society are, as rational beings, ultimately harmonious. It follows, then, that effective coöperation for social ends can be brought about only through a common understanding, — never by the application of force.

### 5. THE IDEALISTIC CONCEPTION OF SOCIAL DUTY

From this conception of social relations there arises a correlative conception of social duties. The substance of the conception is contained in Kant's maxim, "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of others, as an end withal and never as a means only." This means that we are to treat our neighbours as reasonable beings, who are capable of a just appreciation of social ends, and need only to be convinced of the value of an object to work for its attainment. In other words, we are to treat them as *persons*, who are capable of appreciating values, and not as mechanical objects, which act only upon the application of force. For example, in a business transaction with my neighbour I am to assume that his intentions are honourable, and I am therefore to treat him with confidence and frankness rather than with suspicion. As an employer I am to assume that the workman has an intrinsic interest in his work, and that he requires only a clear understanding of its significance to stimulate him to his best efforts. The teacher is to take a similar attitude toward his pupil; he is to assume that the child has a natural interest in his studies (since otherwise the studies have no value to him) and that what he needs, therefore, is guidance rather than pressure. Or, again, in seeking an appointment I am to assume that the choice will be made upon the basis of intrinsic qualification; my duty is then simply to see that the person with the power of appointment is provided with sufficient information; any attempt at the exercise of influence or pressure would be unworthy both of him and of myself. In a word, then, the idealist condemns as immoral the whole system of

things involving physical and mental coercion. He condemns not only the use of brute force, and the exercise of political, social, and family influence, but even the employment of persuasion and argument, except to the extent that they appeal to strictly disinterested motives. According to him, the only truly moral relations between men are those based upon the mutual assumption of an absolute purity of motive.

This view of the moral attitude toward others should be contrasted with that of hedonism. The hedonist is an advocate of pressure. Each of us, he claims, is actuated solely by self-interest—that is, by the demands of the bodily self—and our interests are thus fundamentally in conflict. It is therefore the right and the duty of each to obtain all that he can; and he cannot expect that others will aid him except to the extent that adequate pressure is applied. But, according to idealism, any actual conflict of activities will be due not to a real conflict of interests but to an absence of mutual understanding. It is therefore the duty of each to respect and to strive to understand the point of view of his neighbour. In mutual understanding and sympathy each will acquire a larger comprehension of his own nature, and each will contribute more effectively to the realisation of those generically human ends which are the ultimate expression of the real interests of all.

This mutual understanding is not, however, to be confounded with 'altruism.' 'Altruism' is the antithesis of 'egoism' and of hedonistic coinage; and both terms assume that individual interests are in mutual conflict, and that each is determined by the demand for enjoyment. Altruism means, then, a sacrifice of my own enjoyment to that of my neighbour. Now in striving to reach a condition of mutual understanding and sympathy between myself and my neighbour, I assume that he is distinctly *not* concerned about the reflex emotional effects of objects upon himself; if this were the nature of his interest it is clear that 'sympathy' in any real sense would be out of the question. I assume, on the contrary, that he has a gen-

uine and disinterested regard for the ends of humanity as such, and it is the community of such disinterested regard which is to constitute the basis of sympathy between us. Accordingly, neither of us finds it necessary to think of the profit or fame of the other, or in any way to consider the emotional effect which an object may have upon him. So far as a man is truly reasonable, and so far as his ideals are truly social, he will be ashamed of such individual sensibilities in himself and inclined to despise them in others, and above all things he will insist that his neighbour should not endeavour to 'make him happy.' Social sympathy, in the idealistic sense, is therefore not a reciprocal regard for each other's happiness. It is simply the obverse of a disinterested regard for human purposes as such.

In order rightly to understand the idealistic social attitude this obverse relation must be carefully noted. In the last analysis the idealistic attitude toward others is not so much 'social,' in the popular and somewhat sentimental sense of sharing their joys and sorrows, as it is impersonal. It thus tends to approach in character the stoical and Kantian attitude of a regard for pure reason, but with this difference,—that, in the more modern sense, the demands of pure reason are the generic purposes of human life. With this difference in mind it becomes possible to find in 'reason' a basis for social sympathy. On the one hand, it is the breadth and seriousness of his devotion to impersonal ends which determines for the individual his moral worth and justifies his self-respect, while it is through the assumption of similar motives in others that he shows his respect for them. On the other hand, through a common regard for generically human ends—and only thus—there is created a genuine human sympathy, which is broadened and deepened as these common interests increase.

It will be claimed, however, that men are, after all, not 'rational' in the idealistic sense; that there will always be some persons who will take advantage of our confidence to rob

us, some workmen who will shirk their work when they are not watched, and some pupils who will neglect their lessons unless they are punished for it; that, therefore, a man who should hold strictly to the idealistic rule would soon find himself not only deprived of all his possessions but without the power to accomplish any useful object. To this objection the idealist would reply that men are rational to the extent that they are treated as such. If I find other men disposed to be hostile to me it is because my own attitude toward them is not strictly reasonable and disinterested. The teacher or employer has not wholly laid aside the pride of command, the business man, while striving to be fair, is still not wholly forgetful of his private interests, and the applicant for a position is still not wholly ingenuous in his statement of his qualifications. It is this lingering tendency to be on our guard and to protect our private interests which encourages others in an attitude of suspicion and hostility. If our motives were pure we should find, according to idealism, that others were ready to trust us and to coöperate with us. The man who puts an absolute confidence in others is less likely to be deceived, even by those who think him a fool for his honesty; the man who is less likely to resort to force is less likely to be attacked; and the nation which gives more attention to the machinery of industry and less to the machinery of war is at least less likely to be the object of foreign aggression. In all human relations confidence begets confidence and suspicion begets suspicion.

For the idealistic conception of society, see Wundt, *Ethics*, Part III, ch. i, 2, *e*; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book III, chs. ii and iv; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay ii.

For the conception of society as an organism, see Wundt, Part IV, ch. iii, 4; Sir Leslie Stephen, *Science of Ethics*, ch. iii; Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, ch. viii; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, pp. 125 ff.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IDEALISM AS A SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY

#### 1. THE IDEALISTIC STANDPOINT AND METHOD

IN outlining the system of philosophy which furnishes the background to idealistic ethics, it will be convenient to repeat the order followed in our sketch of the hedonistic system, beginning with a reference to its standpoint and method. Both have received preliminary definition elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The idealistic standpoint is the standpoint of self-consciousness, as distinct from that of the external observer; and the idealistic method is the teleological method, which explains the peculiarities of objects by reference to their purpose, as distinct from the method of exact science, which explains them by reference to their mechanical structure. It remains, then, only to note the extent to which the idealistic method is actually operative in human thought. It is clear that our common-sense conceptions are frequently teleological; for example, if a man were asked, "What is a typewriter?" his answer would most probably state its use rather than its structure. But a scientist of the strict type would probably hold this to be a matter of mere temporary convenience. He would point to the biologist, who is constantly explaining variations by reference to their use, but at the same time insisting that the ultimately real ground of the variation is purely mechanical; and he would claim this as an evidence that the use of teleological conceptions need not imply a teleological view of reality. We find, however, that

<sup>1</sup> Ch. vi, 1.



when the scientist becomes philosopher and attempts to construct a conception of the ultimate reality, he is rarely content with one that is purely mechanical. The most mechanical of conceptions, when extended to cover the world as a whole, is apt to contain some vague implication of a world purpose; otherwise it does not satisfy even the scientist himself. And when we carefully ask ourselves what is necessary to explain the world, we find that we require not only a cause but a *reason* for things; and by a 'reason' for things we mean always a statement of their purpose or end. For example, suppose we are asking for an explanation of death: Why is it that individuals die and give place to others? Why is not the development of the race a continuous, individual activity? Science might perhaps show us that death is a physical and chemical necessity, but this fails to answer our question; for what we wish to know is not the mechanical cause of death but its utility in the world economy. The scientist might then reply that the question is meaningless, — that economy and purpose have no existence except in human imagination and human convenience. But this, in its last analysis, means only that an ultimately satisfactory explanation is not forthcoming. It is not enough to tell us that all the complex world processes may be reduced (*e.g.*) to the law of conservation of energy. We want to know *why* the sum of energy remains constant. And 'why' expresses nothing less than the demand for a reasonable motive. In a word, nothing is finally intelligible for human thought except that which satisfies our sense of the reasonable and desirable.

This point is very important for an appreciation of the idealistic philosophy. We hear on every hand a protest against teleological methods of explanation. They are condemned as anthropomorphic and superstitious. And no doubt they are in origin anthropomorphic (as, in some sense, every form of explanation must be), but nothing which remains a permanent and intrinsic requirement of human thought can be called a superstition. The teleological method is probably the source

of many a crude absurdity, and perhaps it belongs more to art and poetry than to exact science ; but in spite of the repeated criticisms of science, the demand for reasons, as distinct from causes, remains as strong to-day as at any time before, and is found not only among poets and philosophers but, to some extent, among the most rigorous of scientists. Accordingly, though in making his special investigations the natural scientist may have good practical grounds for disregarding the question of reason and purpose and confining himself to that of cause, yet, ultimately, no theory of the world will be really intelligible which does not conceive of the world process as the realisation of some rational and desirable end.

## 2. THE IDEALISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

In conformity with his teleological method, the idealist as a psychologist chooses the process of deliberation and voluntary decision as his type of mental fact. It is here that our action is most obviously purposive and reasoned. *Prima facie*, this character of purposiveness shows all varieties of degree. We might arrange our activities in a scale, placing at one end the kind of activity which is the outcome of the most careful and extended deliberation, and at the other end that in which deliberation is at a minimum, — in which, in other words, action is most habitual and automatic. But, according to idealistic theory, these variations in the extent of the purposive character of our acts are only apparent. Granting that our more habitual actions show at present a relative absence of choice and consciousness, nevertheless they were purposive and conscious when they were originally instituted, and they owe their maintenance and uniformity to the fact that they still continue to serve their purpose, since otherwise they would be immediately modified. The act of lacing my shoe, for example, was originally the result of careful calculation and adjustment ; it is now relatively unconscious, but only so far as it is efficient in attaining its end. This conception applies not only to the

habits formed by ourselves, but to those inherited from our ancestors. According to idealistic theory, all our instincts, however early their formation, were originally the result of choice and deliberation ; they were maintained and passed on to us because they proved to be satisfactory solutions of their particular problems ; and their automatism and reflex character are merely a sign of the extent to which they serve their purpose. Habit, instinct, and reflex act are thus explained as derivatives of the voluntary act.

Now the hedonist reverses the order of derivation. He chooses as his type of human activity that which is relatively automatic, such as the child's instinctive withdrawal of his hand from the candle flame which he has tried to grasp. The human infant is then conceived as a mechanism made up of a large number of such automatic formations, which are found to give pleasure and pain ; and his activity is determined by the pleasantness or painfulness of the stimuli through which these preformed reflexes are set in action by the environment. There is thus no place in the hedonistic system for a really voluntary act ; what we call such is simply a case where two automatic reactions come into conflict. For example, the child is stimulated by the brightness of the candle flame to grasp it, but his action is inhibited by the memory of a former experience, which impels him at the same time to keep his hand away from it. The subjective aspect of this situation is what we call deliberation, and the final inhibition of the weaker reflex by the stronger is what we call voluntary choice. We have then two opposing conceptions of voluntary choice : for the hedonist it is the mechanical resultant of automatic tendencies ; for the idealist it is the original ground of their formation.

The idealist holds a similar view of cognition. His view here is that of the 'apperceptionists' as opposed to the associational view. The problem of cognition may be summarised in the question, How do I know that every object must have its appropriate cause and effect? The associationist, we

remember,<sup>1</sup> refers our knowledge of cause to the influence of environment ; the elements of our experience show certain regularities of coexistence and succession, the result of which is to produce in our minds corresponding associations of cause and effect, and these finally become so fixed in their character that we find ourselves unable to conceive of objects in any but causal relations. Therefore, according to association theory, the conception of cause is the final product of mental development. According to apperception theory it is the original basis of such development. The conception of cause is held to be one of the necessary presuppositions of a purposive activity ; for unless we can assume that events will occur in a fixed order, it will be impossible to make any plans for the future ; unless, for example, the farmer may assume that the sowing of the seed and the fertilisation of the soil will result eventually in a crop, it will be useless for him to think of farming at all. Therefore, as purposive beings we are bound to think of our world as an orderly world. Instead of passively accepting whatever experience offers us, we try to rearrange our experience according to some conception of order ; when we have found an arrangement which is fairly successful as a basis upon which to carry out our plans — such, for example, as the conception of the conservation of energy — we make use of it as a criterion for distinguishing appearance from reality, rejecting whatever contradicts it as false and unreal. The use of such a criterion then becomes a fixed habit, operating, like other habits, with relative unconsciousness ; and the final result of the habit is so to concentrate our attention upon the aspect of order that we completely ignore those elements which would tend to contradict it. Though, for example, we receive two images of every object (one in each eye) we are never, unless our attention is specially called to the fact, aware of more than one, — because, as the apperceptionist would hold, it is necessary for the handling of an object perceived by sight that

<sup>1</sup> Ch. vi, 2.

we see it single. The perception of order is due, then, not to the nature of experience, as associationism teaches, but to the selection demanded by our purposive activity.

We see, then, that for the idealist the essential feature of mind is *activity*. Mind is a *process*,—not a mere succession of states. Mental development is the gradual unfolding of an inner purpose,—not, as the associationist conceives it, a gradual modification of the mental image through the addition of elements from without. The conception of activity covers both intellect and will. In both its aspects the mind carries out its own aims instead of copying the environment. Instead of yielding to the conditions of pleasure and pain, the human being insists upon satisfying his inner sense of value; and instead of accepting without criticism the world offered him by experience (*i.e.* by external sense stimuli), he assumes the privilege of selection, ignoring those elements which are not useful to him, rearranging those to which he attends in a manner to suit his own purposes, thus setting up his own criterion of truth and falsity. And thus the idealistic man, instead of conforming to his environment, makes the environment conform to him.

From this it follows that the idealist is a believer in free will. This statement requires perhaps some explanation, since freedom, as we have noted,<sup>1</sup> has two rather distinct meanings: it may mean that action is determined by 'reason,' *i.e.* by our sense of value, but not by environmental conditions; or it may mean that action is not determined in any way, and that a man's act has no relation either to his character or to his external circumstances. The second conception of freedom, though doubtless the more popular one, receives but little recognition in philosophical circles to-day, for it seems clear that, if we are to discuss human conduct at all, we cannot but conceive it to be related in some way to character, and thus in some sense determined by it, whatever our conception of character may be. At any rate it is not in this sense that the idealist believes in free will.

<sup>1</sup> pp. 100, 101.

According to him, freedom means that our action is determined by our reason, or our conception of value, and is not determined by automatic and mechanical tendencies set in motion by external stimuli. The latter is the hedonistic and deterministic view. The deterministic view, we remember, is the natural outcome of the standpoint of external observation, from which standpoint our actions appear to be the result of external stimuli, the factor of choice and motive not being in evidence. The libertarian view is similarly the outcome of the standpoint of self-consciousness and self-activity. For in the moment of choice I always feel myself to be free, whatever I may think about my past actions or the actions of others. In the actual presence of conflicting alternatives I cannot but believe that I can choose the course which I think to be desirable,<sup>1</sup> whatever be the strength of the opposing impulses ; if I am fully certain that eating of the dish before me will be followed by an attack of illness, I shall not eat of it. And in thinking of the past, I tend to excuse any irrational action on the ground that at the moment of action I was not fully self-conscious ; if I ate of the indigestible dish, it was because I was not fully alive to the fact of its indigestible character. In any case automatic tendencies have no power to determine my action when I am fully self-conscious. But the idealist is not content with the assertion of a *relation* between self-conscious action and rational choice. He claims also that I can always *be* self-conscious, that I can preserve my sense of value without regard to the strength of external influences. And he holds further that, ultimately at any rate, I shall be able to express my sense of value and, through effective overt action, attain the ends which it demands. This means, of course, that the environment must eventually prove to be of plastic material, adaptable to any demands made upon it by human reason. For only thus can we be really free.

<sup>1</sup> See Sidgwick's account of the feeling of freedom, *Methods of Ethics* (4th ed.), p. 67.



## 3. THE IDEALISTIC BIOLOGY

It is evident that the idealistic theory of the psychical process presupposes an idealistic theory of biological evolution. For if the conscious and purposive principle assumed to underly the phenomena of human life is not also in some sense the principle governing the earlier stages of animal life, the whole idealistic psychology rests upon the air. The purposive aspect of human activity would then have to be regarded as a mere illusion; it could not be the real nature of the process. Now in chapter vi it was shown that there are two main tendencies in biological theory, represented respectively by the Lamarckian school, which (according to our interpretation) places the burden of responsibility for the course of evolution upon the environment, and by the school of Weismann, which places it upon the inherent nature of the organism,—in particular, upon the constitution of the germ plasm. It was shown also that the hedonistic moralist is definitely committed to the Lamarckian standpoint, and, by implication, that the Lamarckian in biology must be a hedonist in ethics; and it was intimated that the same relations would be found to exist between the standpoint of the Weismann school and idealistic ethics. The first of these propositions was easily made evident. The second is somewhat difficult to establish,—especially in view of the fact that the biological representatives of the Weismann school are generally explicit in their announcement that the constituents of the germ plasm are purely mechanical elements, and the process of evolution a purely mechanical process. And a satisfactory disproof of their statement could not be offered without examining the mechanical operations assumed by them in minute detail,—a task which only a trained biologist is capable of performing. I shall therefore not attempt anything in the way of proof, but shall merely indicate the general grounds which we may have as outsiders for believing that what the biologist calls germ plasm is nothing more nor less than

what the idealist calls self,—in other words, that the germ-plasm theory is nothing more nor less than an idealistic and teleological theory of evolution.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place, the assumption which is fundamental to the theory of germ plasm—namely, the absolute stability and continuity of the germ plasm since the origin of life—seems to be *a priori* incompatible with a mechanical conception of its nature and operations. For, according to the mechanical conception of the universe, every object is subject to the influence of surrounding objects, including not only those immediately surrounding it, but all other objects in the universe; according to the law of gravitation, every particle of matter is attracted by every other. And this conception is largely confirmed by our common experience of mechanical objects. There is nothing which, in the course of time, does not suffer some kind of modification from the presence of surrounding objects. We may cover an iron girder with paint to protect it from rust, but it will still be subject to molecular changes due to the vibration of other bodies in its neighbourhood; and these modifications alone (not to speak of others) could not be guarded against except by some kind of mechanical adjustment which should exactly neutralise each particular vibratory movement by which the object were approached,—an adjustment whose mechanical complexity passes the limits of our imagination. But of all the objects which are susceptible to external influences the organic substances are the most susceptible. And their increased sensitiveness is due, according to the mechanical view, to their greater complexity, which may also be inferred from the very common experience that the more complex a machine the more likely it is to get out of order and the

<sup>1</sup> The interpretation of the biological controversy offered here and in chapter vi is clearly implied in Professor James's chapter on "Necessary Truths and Effects of Experience" (Vol. II, ch. xxviii, of his *Psychology*). In fact, if we take this chapter together with his chapters on Emotion, Instinct, Will, and Reasoning, we have a full set of materials for an idealistic theory of psychological and biological development.

more easily it is rendered useless. Now of all organic substances, the germ plasm is assumed to be the most complex. It is therefore *a fortiori* inconceivable that it should be at the same time the most stable. And still less is it conceivable that its stability should have remained unbroken since the origin of life. There is only one hypothesis upon which the principle of absolute stability could be maintained, namely, that the germ plasm had been perpetually protected by some apparatus which exactly neutralised each particular influence by which it had been approached; but such hypothesis would of itself involve the abandonment of the mechanical principle and the assumption of a directing consciousness.

It appears, then, that in the fundamental postulate of the germ-plasm theory we have not only a contradiction of the mechanical principle but, in its last analysis, a direct protest against the application of that principle to the phenomena of life. When we carefully examine the postulate of stability and continuity, what it appears to mean is that the life process is in a peculiar manner self-sustaining, — that, in contrast to the purely mechanical activities, it is not interrupted or thrown out of gear by every change in external conditions.

So much for the negative aspects of the germ plasm. It appears now, in the second place, that when the nature of the function performed by the germ plasm is carefully analysed, it can be interpreted in no way except as a teleological function, — a function of conscious direction. What the germ plasm is supposed to accomplish, through its stability and continuity, is the maintenance, in its continuity and integrity, of the animal 'type.' But an animal type, it appears, is not a mere sum of constituent features.<sup>1</sup> The type, as distinct from the individual, is not merely the aggregate of those features common to all individuals. 'Man,' for example, is not merely the aggregate of the features common to all men. If this were our method of defining the type, 'man' would have very little

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Leslie Stephen's analysis of 'type,' *The Science of Ethics*, pp. 74 ff.

human meaning ; he would be little more than the 'featherless biped' of formal logic. Rather must we say, then, that the human type is expressed in all the features of every individual ; every individual human action is in some way an expression of the meaning or the type of human nature. No doubt some features are more common than others, and perhaps, under the conditions of human life, some features are more essential, but it is conceivable that two individuals might both be typically human in character though differing in every particular feature. By an animal type we mean, then, not a sum of constant features, but a constant *relation* between varying features. In assigning two individuals to the same type, we mean that the *principle* of their being is the same. But identity of principle as applied to animal types is ultimately nothing less than an identity of purpose ; when we speak of the 'principle of life,' we distinguish the life processes from others and conceive them as organised with reference to an end ; and the principle of an individual type is the more specialised end implied in its characteristic system of activities.

The germ-plasm theory is then simply an attempt to formulate this purposive principle upon a concrete biological basis. It sets out with the assumption that the principle is real, that in spite of numerous individual variations there is a certain stability and continuity of type, — that, in a word, the animal type is not, as all mechanical analogies would lead us to suppose, a mere reflection of its environment. It then attributes the persistence of type to the action of an indestructible and unmodifiable germ plasm. But how does the germ plasm perform its duty ? Evidently, when we come to the point, by maintaining a certain balance of functions, a certain organic relation of structural parts, through the infinity of varying conditions tending to individual modifications ; in other words, by keeping the organism in the line of its underlying meaning and purpose in spite of obstructive conditions. When we thus conceive of the activity of the germ plasm (as I believe we must), and when,

moreover, we remember that the germ plasm is still a mere conception, not anything that is positively identified under the microscope, it appears to be, in spite of the denials of those who stand for it, a function of conscious direction.

This will make it clear upon what biological basis the idealistic psychology rests. The idealist claims that our mental life is an endeavour to realise the purpose implied in our inherited nature. The hedonist admits that we have an inherited nature of a certain specific kind, but he claims that all these specific tendencies, or instincts, may be traced to the effects of our ancestral environment. The idealistic answer to this claim is to maintain that, on the contrary, this inherited, or *inherent* nature, including its purposive character, is a factor which has been constantly present since the beginning of life, and which has been, throughout the course of evolution, the positively determining factor. It then appears that the self, or purpose, which dominates human life is nothing but a fuller expression of the principle underlying life as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. THE IDEALISTIC COSMOLOGY

It remains only to consider the attitude of the idealist toward the inorganic world. It will be remembered that the hedonist, to the extent that he became a consistent and uncompromising representative of his school, tended more and more to ignore the activity of consciousness, until finally he either denied its existence altogether, or conceived it to be, at any rate, nothing more than a highly complex arrangement of atoms and forces. The idealist, to the extent that he is similarly rigorous, goes equally far in the opposite direction. As a pure idealist he is not content with attributing consciousness to human action, nor

<sup>1</sup> The presence of idealistic motives in biological thought might be still more conclusively demonstrated by a reference to the new German 'vitalistic' school, which attributes the organic character of animal structure to a non-mechanical (in the ordinary sense) principle of harmonious coördination; but the doctrine is not yet sufficiently developed to serve our purposes here.

yet with the extension of the conscious principle to cover the world of life, but holds it to be finally the one principle determining the activities of the world as a whole. In other words, after merely minimising the limitations offered by external mechanical conditions, he comes finally to the conclusion, either that these conditions have no real existence, or that they are, at any rate, only the expression of a larger range of consciousness and purpose, and hence offer no real obstructions to human activity.

The view which completely cancels the external world is that of subjective idealism. Its most uncompromising representative was Bishop Berkeley.<sup>1</sup> All that we have ever known to exist, says Berkeley, or all that we ever could know to exist, is our ideas ; for whatever is presented to us is presented in an idea. It is therefore impossible that we should infer or even conceive the existence of anything but our ideas. What we call the external material world is really nothing more than a certain mode or quality of our consciousness.

In the interpretation of idealistic philosophies, the extent to which they accept the subjective theory is usually difficult to determine. The extreme form of the subjective theory has probably never been genuinely accepted. The argument which thus summarily disposes of the material world disposes at the same time both of other personalities and of God ; for if nothing exists except what I have in idea, then surely other personalities have as little reality as matter itself. Even Berkeley was not willing to accept this consequence of his view ; in fact, it seems clear that in directing his argument against 'that inert substance called matter' his intention was to strengthen the argument for the existence of God. But not even matter is to be thus lightly abandoned. It may not be inert and unconscious, as it is ordinarily conceived, but we cannot avoid recognising a world which is in some sense other than ourselves, and thus in some sense outside of ourselves. Accordingly, the more com-

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Human Knowledge.*



mon form of idealism is to some extent objective, reinterpreting the external world rather than completely annulling its existence.

The earlier form of the objective view is the naïve animism of the ancients ; it finds expression in their poetry and mythology, in which all natural objects, such as trees, rivers, clouds, and mountains, are conceived as personalities, and their movements interpreted as the expression of a personal will. These naïve conceptions have given way, of course, to the progress of science and philosophy, yet the animistic motive is still represented in the idealistic philosophy. Idealists have ceased to believe in the individual personality of trees and rivers, but this means only that they have extended the conception of personality to cover nature as a whole. In theological terms it means that, instead of many gods, each controlling a special object or a special department of nature, there is one god, who reveals himself in nature as a whole. Philosophical theology and idealistic philosophy have thus a large measure of agreement. Though the philosopher as such may shun the term 'God' on account of its anthropomorphic associations, and may prefer to speak of the 'conscious principle,' or of the 'universal self,' yet the latter has in substance the same meaning as the former. Whatever differences remain relate chiefly to the manner in which the personality of God is conceived. For the idealistic philosopher God is simply the larger personality in whom all individual persons find the completion of their own nature ; God is thus the complete social personality, or world personality, of which the individuals are but specialised expressions. The theologian, on the other hand, has a tendency to separate the personalities of God and man in much the same manner as in common thought we separate the personalities of individual men. But in the more philosophical theology of the present day this tendency is disappearing, and the theologian is coming to think of individual men as having their being *in* God rather than outside of him.

In more recent idealistic philosophy the place of man in

nature rests upon the analogy of the place of consciousness in human activity. We find that in proportion as we are conscious of what we are doing, our activity is a process of readjustment with relation to an end, and that in proportion as our activity is automatic and habitual, it is also unconscious. Accordingly, taking our activity as a whole, consciousness is the point of readjustment; automatic or mechanical action represents the adjustments already made. Here, then, within the individual life, we have just the terms and relations which we have to connect in our theory of the world as a whole; and, according to idealism, the relations which are found in this smaller world may logically and reasonably be extended to cover the larger. Making this extension, we take the position that in the world as a whole consciousness is simply the process of readjustment, while mechanical movements are adjustments already made. Inorganic movements are, like human habits, those which maintain a constant regularity; organic movements show everywhere a degree of readjustment; and the highest degree of readjustment is found in the voluntary acts of human beings.

But the readjustment of human action is a readjustment to an end; and, as we have seen, the end is in some sense already contained or implied in the automatic activities themselves. When these activities became automatic, it was because they had effected a proper adjustment to their end; if they have again come to consciousness, it is because they call for readjustment. But if they were able to respond to newer demands, they must have been in some sense conscious all the time. In other words, what we have to deal with, in the distinction between consciousness and mechanism, is not an absolute distinction of consciousness and unconsciousness, but a relative distinction of clear and obscure consciousness, — or, as more commonly stated, between consciousness and sub-consciousness. When our activities emerge into clear consciousness it means that we are attempting to realise our end more definitely and completely than before; the forces at

work in us are coming to a larger realisation of their own meaning. Now here again, according to idealism, we have a scheme of the relations between man and nature. No new principle appears when we pass from the inorganic to the organic, nor is the inorganic world in any absolute sense without consciousness or meaning. The physical and chemical reactions are like our habitual actions, the organised expression of a meaning already acquired. When the physical substances come to constitute the material of an organic body, it indicates only that this inner meaning is more completely and definitely realised, while, on the other hand, the highest flights of human consciousness are nothing more than the last and most complete revelation of the meaning of inanimate nature.

If we adopt this view, we cannot regard the inorganic world as in any absolute sense hostile to human purposes. If such hostility appears, it must mean that we do not fully understand either nature or ourselves. For example, we speak of being bound by the conditions of space and time. But, an idealist might urge, these conditions have never exerted any restraining force except to the extent that men have failed to understand both nature and themselves. Through the application of steam and electricity modern civilisation has very largely removed the restrictions which space and time placed upon the ancients, and has created for itself an environment which is to a large extent new. Yet the external conditions themselves, conceived apart from the work of man, are not different now from at any time in the past; nature offered as much to the ancients in the way of materials (*e.g.* coal and iron) as she offers to us. The real difference lies in the extent of human self-consciousness. The modern man has attained a more complete consciousness of his ends and his capacities, and the growth in self-consciousness is at the same time a growth of consciousness with regard to the meaning of nature. Accordingly, the only real limitations to the attainment of human purposes are those of self-knowledge. If we were completely

self-conscious — if we had a complete knowledge of our nature and of our life purpose — there would be no aspect of the life purpose which might not be realised at once.

This view of the world may, in conclusion, be regarded as simply a later development and a more explicit statement of Kant's principle that the law of reason is the law of nature. By the law of reason he means the law of consciousness as such; and in conceiving it to be the law of nature, he means that the conscious principle is the principle of the universe as a whole. But 'nature' is for him simply an external appearance overlying the rational principle; and no connection is made out between nature and the rational principle as revealed in man. The later idealism undertakes to connect the two through the conception of evolution. It holds now not merely that the world is rational but that its rational quality comes to light in the course of its development. It then follows that the rational principle as revealed in man is simply the last and most perfect expression of the principle which from the beginning has controlled the operations of inanimate nature.

On the idealistic standpoint and method, see Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book I, ch. i, i.

The clearest exposition of the apperceptional, or idealistic, psychology is to be found in Stout, *Analytic Psychology*. See also James, *Principles of Psychology*, chs. xii and xxiv; Ward, art. on "Psychology," *Encyclopædia Britannica*; Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*, ch. iii, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," *Psychological Review*, Vol. III, No. 4. For a further account of the distinction between associational and apperceptional theory, see two papers by the present writer in the *Philosophical Review*: "The Associational Conception of Experience," Vol. IX, No. 3; "Contiguity and Similarity," Vol. IX, No. 6.

For a statement of the Weismann theory, see Weismann, *The Germ-Plasm*, tr. Parker and Rönnefeldt (Scribner, 1898); Romanes, *An Examination of Weismannism*.

For the idealistic view of the world as a whole, see Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book I, ch. ii; Lloyd, *Dynamic Idealism* (a brief and concise statement of the general features of modern idealism); Royce, *The World and the Individual* (Vol. II for the ethical doctrine).

## CHAPTER XIV

### IDEALISM AND COMMON SENSE

#### 1. IDEALISM AND THE COMMON-SENSE SCALE

It will be remembered that, in estimating the value of hedonistic theory, we found it to be approximately valid for the more elementary regions of moral activity, but progressively inapplicable as we go higher in the scale. In this chapter I shall endeavour to show that, with regard to idealism, the situation is exactly reversed, — that idealism offers a relatively consistent and systematic account of the motives and forces at work in the higher stages of morality and culture, but becomes progressively inapplicable as we go lower. In this showing the burden of argument will rest somewhat on the positive side, whereas in the examination of hedonism it rested on the negative. The reason for this is evident. Hedonism has very distinctly an area of concrete application, while its limitations are difficult to define. On the other hand, it is quite difficult to translate the idealistic theory into concrete terms, and for this reason its practical possibilities as a theory of conduct are frequently underestimated.

There will be no difficulty, perhaps, in establishing our general position, that the attitude of men is more distinctly idealistic as they stand higher in the cultural scale; for nothing more clearly distinguishes the attitude of the more conscientious man than his seriousness of purpose and his sense of responsibility with regard to the use and development of his capacities and opportunities. From the higher standpoint every capacity or opportunity implies a duty. At the lower stage the use and

development of a capacity is a question mainly of its conduciveness to material welfare and happiness. The contrast is clearly illustrated in the attitude shown by men of different stages of moral development in the choice of business or profession. To many men it is a question merely of the best living. Yet there are few who will not make some sacrifices in favour of an occupation which more nearly expresses their native interests. For that matter there are few workmen, of however low a grade, who fail to appreciate the dignity of being intrusted with a task demanding the special exercise of skill, and who would not, indeed, make some material sacrifices for the sake of the more responsible sort of work. But for a really conscientious man this is not a matter of choice, as it is more commonly conceived, but a matter of duty. It is not now a question merely of a remunerative occupation, but of finding that occupation which will bring all one's special capacities into play and realise their human value. And the responsibility for making this choice is only increased by circumstances which relieve one of the necessity of remuneration.

Not only is the idealistic motive shown in our sense of individual responsibility, but it underlies our more advanced conceptions of human values in general. It is in proportion as activity becomes purposive and, in the idealistic sense, the expression of individuality, that human life as such becomes valuable. It is this standard of value which, from the higher standpoint, measures the real superiority of human as compared with animal life ; human life is superior because its spiritual capacities are greater. It is this also which gives to human life as such a higher value in civilised communities than among savages ; and indeed, nothing so clearly marks the progress of civilisation as the value placed upon human life as such. It is this, again, which leads us to attach a higher value to some lives than to others. No doubt every man's life contains some quality necessary to the completeness of human life as such. But some lives represent a more marked capacity and have a greater measure



of individuality and meaning than others. Thus it happens that, while death is rarely felt to be anything but a loss, yet the death of a young man, especially of a man of great capacity and promise, is felt to be in a peculiar manner irreparable. This is not because his loss is a material disadvantage — it may not be such to those who feel it most — but because, finally, it means that some important quality of life has failed to attain expression, as a result of which our human life as a whole is poorer than it might otherwise have been.

## 2. THE IDEALISTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HIGHER VIRTUES

The foregoing will serve to suggest the meaning of the higher morality in general. We shall now see how this meaning appears in the more advanced aspects of the common virtues and the more conscientious interpretation of the common moral rules.

First, the rule of honesty. In chapter vii it was pointed out that the aspect of convenience, which is clear enough in the more elementary grades of honesty, is completely overshadowed in the higher grades by the importance of honesty as a condition of social sympathy. To this it must now be added that the basis of social sympathy is mutual respect, — a belief on the part of each in the purity and disinterestedness of the other's motives; for nothing creates so great a gulf between ourselves and others as the suspicion that they cannot be trusted to abstract from their selfish interests. This mutual respect includes evidently the condition of self-respect; and mutual honesty is an elementary condition of both. The rule of honesty is thus an expression of the Kantian principle commanding a respect for rational beings as such. To see how clearly this is implied in the rule, we have only to note the implications conveyed in a breach of it. Among more cultivated men nothing is so deeply offensive as the imputation of dishonesty, and nothing is harder to forgive than to have been made the object of deceit. When I lie to my neighbour, I take him out

of the category of rational beings ; I refuse to abide by the attitude he would take if he were in full possession of the facts, and I carefully prepare my information so as to produce a certain definite result. In other words, I play upon him and make him the subject of manipulation, as I should make use of a machine. There may be cases where I can justify my deceit, but it then means that I declare him unworthy of human consideration and fit only to be made use of, as far as I may have a use for him, and to be thrown away, like a worn-out garment, when he is no longer useful. And if I cannot justify my action, a similar implication is conveyed with regard to myself ; it now means that I am not ready to put my actions to the test of criticism ; it thus contains the admission that they are the outcome of irrational impulses rather than of a judgment of value. In either case the act of deceit implies a denial of the distinctively rational quality of human nature.

The idealistic motive may be seen, again, in the attitude of more cultivated persons toward the subject of marriage and of sexual relations generally. According to hedonism, the assumption of the marriage state and the choice of a wife are determined by considerations of material well-being, which have reference partly to sexual gratification, but chiefly perhaps to the comforts and advantages of domestic life ; and the duty of observing determinate sexual relations is based mainly upon the advantage of maintaining the integrity of the family and home. But, important as these considerations are, they are overshadowed in the minds of more cultivated men by other considerations felt to be more important. It is a very low order of man who would deliberately choose his wife for her sexual attractiveness, and it is not a very high attitude which looks chiefly to her 'domestic' qualities. To a really high-minded man, the wife represents more than these considerations of convenience taken either singly or all together ; she is rather to be regarded as the most complete expression of his self,—the most unqualified realisation of his conception of ethical and

spiritual worth. It is this attitude toward her which justifies the sexual relation, and which converts it from a gross form of indulgence into the most complete form of self-expression. And it is this view of the relation which chiefly accounts for the shame and distress that follow a rupture of marital relations, and which induces men and women to live together long after they have ceased to have any personal sympathy; for to acknowledge that one's marriage is a failure is to acknowledge that one has been a creature of passion and impulse in the most important decision of one's life. Such acknowledgment is the most complete confession of irresponsibility and lack of self-knowledge.

And when we look at the other side of sexual relations — the immoral side — we find no better illustration of Kant's conception of treating persons as means rather than as ends. In the act of prostitution the woman is very distinctly converted into a mere object of use. The situation of the man is not materially different, for, to the woman, he is nothing more than a means of obtaining money. In the whole range of human conduct there is no clearer instance of the situation where human beings deliberately make use of each other, and where each becomes to the other a mere bit of rubbish when the condition of usefulness is past. Among the many evils attending prostitution, none is of such vital importance in the eyes of cultivated persons as this fact of social and spiritual degradation.

Let us look next at the duty of self-preservation. It is probably fair to say (though the statement may be contested) that this duty acquires a greater imperativeness as men rise higher in the cultural scale. We lose, to be sure, some of our superstitious horror of suicide, but at the same time we gain an increasing sense of the responsibility imposed by the mere fact of life. Now hedonism, in its attempt to justify the importance attached by common sense to this duty, is obliged to assume that life under any circumstances must involve a balance of pleasure over pain, and that this balance increases with the ad-

vance of culture. But there seems to be no point at which the hedonistic conception is more inadequate. So far as we can see, some men are temperamentally happy and contented, while others are unhappy and discontented, and their temperament has apparently little to do with their external circumstances, nor does the situation differ now from what it has been at any time in the past. Hence, on the basis of happiness, self-preservation has no universal or general value ; to live or not to live is a question which, from a hedonistic standpoint, must be answered according to circumstances, and which should often be answered in the negative. If we are then to account for the practically absolute character which the rule of self-preservation holds in the code of common sense, it is necessary to assume that the motive which impels men to live as long as life may be preserved, and which becomes stronger as men rise in the evolutionary scale, is the expression, not of a demand for happiness, but of a demand for the continuance of life and the development of its possibilities under all circumstances and to the utmost degree. In other words, the duty of self-preservation presupposes the absolute value of human life as such.

In considering the special duties, we should note also the attitude of more cultivated men toward science, literature, and art. The duty of cultivating our capacities in these directions is hardly recognised in the lower stages of morality ; from the lower standpoints the arts and sciences are at best allowable luxuries. It is clear, however, that to a more enlightened conscience their cultivation becomes a positive duty. And here again, it seems, the obligation is not sufficiently accounted for by hedonism. For though we grant that development in any direction has the effect of rendering men more capable generally, and hence more capable of dealing with material conditions, yet, if our object were material welfare only, it ought to be better attained by a more direct concentration upon the physical sciences than our common-sense conception of educational values is willing to allow.

It must be noted, also, that though we speak of æsthetic *pleasure*, yet the objects which have for us the highest beauty are by no means those which give us the greatest pleasure; rather should it be said that the appreciation of the highest beauty within our range involves always a certain strain upon our attention, while those objects whose beauty is thoroughly *enjoyed* fall always somewhat below the highest. It seems hopeless, therefore, to attempt to justify the importance attached to the arts and sciences by their conduciveness to happiness. Our estimation of them is never a question of happiness, but only of the strength and permanence — the universally human character — of the impulses which they represent. Now the impulses to know and to appreciate are among the most fundamental of our nature. Even the lower animals have an appreciation of beauty and show also a keen curiosity with regard to things that do not practically concern them, — in other words, a desire for knowledge for knowledge's sake. It thus appears that the tendencies which find their satisfaction in beauty and truth are among the most ancient in our nature. The history of the race shows that they are also among the most permanent and universal, claiming the attention of men whenever the elementary bodily needs are sufficiently provided for to admit of it, and demanding with every advance of civilisation a constantly increasing measure of satisfaction. The activities of art and science are thus among the clearest cases of pure yet imperative self-expression, — in which satisfaction is felt to be vitally necessary, yet unconnected with considerations of material advantage. And the importance which they hold in the minds of more conscientious persons is one of the best evidences of the presence of the idealistic principle.

### 3. IDEALISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

Further indications of the idealistic motive may be obtained from a consideration of the social problem and of the attitude

of modern times toward personal liberty. Upon first glance it may seem that in very recent times this attitude has been considerably modified, and that the desire for liberty which animated our forefathers of a century ago has now been subordinated to the demand for a more practical good. A first view of the present social situation suggests that the difficulty is too much liberty. The doctrine of individual rights has now become a basis for monopolistic abuse; it is owing to the system of free competition, unrestrained by governmental control, that men are able to corner the markets, to control the distribution of the necessities of life, and thus to further their private interests to the serious disadvantage of the community. And there can be no doubt that at the present time nearly all thoughtful men are in favour of reforms which should render such abuses impossible. In view of this situation, a hedonist might argue that, when men are compelled to choose between liberty and material well-being, their preference is unquestionably in favour of the latter and that, if they attach any importance to liberty, it is only so far as the recognition of liberty is on the whole industrially more advantageous.

But upon further consideration it appears that the social problem is not altogether a question of material well-being. We cannot say that men as a whole are now more poorly supplied with the necessities than in the past. While the rich have grown richer, it is probably not true that the poor have grown poorer. In fact everything goes to show that, from a purely material standpoint, not only the rich but the poorest of the poor have profited by the organisation of industry. So far as the question of distribution is concerned the real grievance is not that the masses receive less than formerly, but that they fail to receive their just share of the increase which they have helped to bring about. But this is quite a different complaint from that of poverty. It now means, not that the rank and file of men are poorer, but that their personal efforts are not prop-



erly recognised, — in other words, that their natural rights and liberties have suffered infringement.

But the social problem is by no means confined to the question of distribution. A more vital though probably less obvious difficulty is presented by the conditions under which the work of production is done. The modern organisation of industry has a tendency to deprive the rank and file not merely of their just share of the returns but of a just share in the initiation and direction of the work of production. Where, under the older methods, every man was his own master, or might expect to become his own master, we now have a situation in which the work of thousands is under the absolute dictation of a single master. And so far has this tendency developed that at the present time we may see practically the whole population of the most democratic nation in the world anxiously watching the movements of a small group of financiers, if not those of a single man, in whom the organisation of industry has lodged the power to direct much of the productive work of country. In this condition of things there is certainly cause for alarm, for we have no security that the power will be used for good ; but probably there is less cause for alarm than for humiliation. Such concentration of power is in itself, apart from any use to be made of it, an offence against every self-respecting citizen. It is a total contradiction of the democratic principle.

Yet this is not the whole difficulty. Modern methods of industry, though representing on the whole a distinct advance in the intellectual conquest of material conditions, have had the effect of lowering the intellectual quality of the work done by the rank and file. Under the older conditions a good workman had to be in some sense a man of brains, of skill, and of taste. The making of a shoe, for example, was a task which called for good judgment and some ability as an artist. But modern conditions have tended rather to reduce the workman to the status of a cog in a machine, which has no task laid upon

it beyond the reiteration of a fixed movement for so many hours a day. Labour without intellectual stimulus soon becomes intolerable ; the continued absence of intellectual activity must result finally in degeneration. Probably it is this difficulty more than any other which lies at the ground of the social discontent.

It is this also which renders the whole problem of social reform so perplexing. It is not enough to offer men greater opportunities for enjoying their leisure hours. For the more important side of a man's life is his work ; and this is, if anything, truer of the man who stands higher in the scale. Work is a condition of moral health. Not, however, the sort of work which chains the hands to a mechanical round of movements, leaving the mind vacant and unsatisfied, but the sort which calls for a harmonious coördination of all one's powers, — for bodily movement, for the exercise of skill and taste, of good judgment and of moral responsibility. An ideal social organisation must clearly be such as to call all these powers into exercise on the part of every man. Yet at the same time the work must be efficient. For this reason it is impossible that we should go back to more primitive industrial methods. To make poor shoes by hand when better can be made by machinery is not merely a material loss but a logical absurdity — an irrational waste of capacities. And here, perhaps, we have a final statement of the social difficulties as these difficulties are felt by more intelligent and thoughtful men : the most serious problem is not to choose between material welfare and personal liberty, but to unite a full opportunity for the exercise of personal capacities with the conditions of their rational and economical use.

When we recognise these elements in the social situation, it becomes clear that the demand for social reform, so far from being a repudiation of personal liberty, aims rather at a greater amount of liberty than we have yet known. This does not mean that none but idealistic elements are present in the situation. Even if the poor have not grown poorer, the diffi-

culties of subsistence, at any rate of a healthy form of subsistence, are still pressing and serious. But as men advance in culture the more personal and spiritual needs take a larger share of their attention. After satisfying the necessities of animal existence, they begin to insist upon living decently and in social relations which place them upon terms of equality with their fellows; these conditions fulfilled, they look still higher, and are not finally to be satisfied until every side of their nature finds expression in a complete and consistent system of self-chosen activity. There has probably never been a time when these higher personal needs were so widely felt as they are now, and when so many men felt the necessity of realising in their lives not merely a prosperous existence but a complete and well-rounded career. It is this far-reaching demand for self-realisation which constitutes the social problem; if the great mass of men were as easily satisfied to-day as they have been in the past, if they were as content with mere comforts, as happy in the worship of social superiors, as naïve in their admiration of wealth and power, the social problem would have no existence. The presence of the problem means that they have outgrown their former selves and the conditions which used to satisfy them; and what they now demand is not less liberty and greater material welfare, but a larger liberty adjusted to the larger demands for self-realisation.

#### 4. THE LIMITATIONS OF IDEALISM

From the foregoing it appears that the higher developments of moral consciousness presuppose the idealistic theory; in chapter vii it was shown that the lower portions of the scale point rather to hedonistic theory. Looking then at the situation as a whole, these appear to be the characteristics of the higher and lower phases respectively: at its more elementary stages life is relatively a process of conformity to environment; at the more advanced stages it becomes a relatively independent

effort to realise a life purpose. The same is true of the development of moral consciousness. In the elementary stages the moral problem is a problem of making a living; in the more advanced stages it is the problem of a complete and consistent development of one's nature.

We have now to raise the important question as to why we may not extend the application of idealistic theory to make it cover the moral scale as a whole. We have seen that the difficulty with regard to a similar application of hedonism lies in the fact that its standard of happiness is not sufficiently comprehensive to cover the whole content of life, or, stated in terms of self, its conception of the self to be preserved is not sufficiently comprehensive to cover the whole of the self that we wish to preserve. On the other hand, we have seen that the hedonistic theory is distinctly clear and practical. When we ask the hedonist for a concrete definition of self-preservation and happiness, he has his answer ready: health and material welfare. And when we ask him about the means of realising these ends, he can direct us at once to the natural sciences, in which the means of attaining health and material ends generally have been to a large extent worked out. And where science has failed to state the means we may, after so clear and specific a statement of the end, rely largely upon our common sense. In short, the hedonist tells us quite clearly and specifically what to aim at and how to set about it from the standpoint of our present situation.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is just here that the idealistic theory is wanting. Theoretically, there would appear to be no reason why we should not conceive of life as a whole, from its lowest to its highest stages, as a continuous, self-consistent process of self-realisation. But in order to apply this conception to the actual facts of life, we should require a concrete statement of the nature of the self, or purpose, supposed to be realised. And in

<sup>1</sup> For the contrary view of the practical value of hedonism see Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book IV, ch. iii; Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*, p. 347.

idealistic ethics such a statement is generally missing. The idealist tells us that all the different phases of our life are related in an organic and purposive unity, but he fails to tell us what the purpose is or just how the different phases of life are unified. We know that each of the several impulses of our nature has its place in the general economy of the self, that the more material desires for food, sex, for bodily activity and rest, have their place there as well as the more spiritual demands for beauty, knowledge, and personal sympathy ; and we know that the real self is to be found in a harmonious coördination of these several impulses. But we are not told in what a harmonious coördination consists. It is clearly not in a subordination of the spiritual to the material, nor yet in a universal subordination of the material to the spiritual, since an undue neglect of material needs will retard the development of the spiritual nature itself. In the meantime the two are in practical conflict, and we are not told how the conflict is to be adjusted.

Failing to offer a concrete statement of the life purpose, the idealist fails also to state how it is to be realised under present conditions ; not being able to tell us *what* we ought to aim at, he is of course unable to tell us *how* we are to set about it. Accordingly, he finds it necessary to ignore the question of conditions, and even to assume that the life purpose is not conditioned at all. Nevertheless, the conditions are a fundamental feature of the problem. Every activity looking toward the realisation of a purpose must take its start from a present point in space and time and from a condition already realised. It is only upon the basis of the present condition that the activity can be carried a step farther. A mere resolve to attain a purpose will accomplish nothing. This must be supplemented by a study of the tools and materials with which we have to work. The painter has to deal with the properties of paint and canvas ; the composer, with the possibilities of musical instruments. Every one, as a moral agent, has to deal with certain objective conditions, — with the economic structure of

the community in which he lives, with the geographical and climatic conditions, with public opinion, with the strength and capacity of his own body, and, for that matter, with his capacity for moral courage. These conditions have to be included in the definition of the end; for, until they have been defined, it is not yet certain that the end can be attained, — in which case its attainment is certainly not to be regarded as a duty.

A slavish conformity to conditions tends to convert morality into a mere animalism, but, on the other hand, a total disregard of conditions tends to convert it into a mere sentimentalism, — a morality of lofty motives and very inadequate results. Thus we see a man who is given to outbreaks of ill-temper contenting himself with an expression of sorrow and a resolve to overcome his weakness, at the same time refusing to consider the possibility that these outbreaks are due to his physical conditions. They may be due to overwork, to late hours, or perhaps to an undue indulgence in stimulants. But if he really means to overcome the moral difficulty, his first task is to remove the unfavourable conditions. And in its extreme form the idealistic attitude may be even worse than sentimental. Relying upon the comfortable assumption that the conditions present no real difficulty, the idealist may take it for granted that the direction of ease and conformity to the existing state of things marks the path along which we are to find the true unity of self. Thus we find that the term 'self-expression' is often used to dignify the worst forms of animal indulgence. Of this sort, also, is the social sentimentalism which urges the labourer to rest satisfied with the dignity of performing a social function, and refuses to discuss the question as to whether he receives, in wages or in any other form, a due recognition of his services.

To avoid the necessity of defining ways and means, the idealist makes a general claim that all the so-called external conditions are contained within the self. They indicate nothing more than absence of self-consciousness, and will therefore disappear when self-consciousness is attained. The argument



has a rather extended metaphysical significance, and we shall not be able to give it a really adequate consideration. But it rests upon certain simple relations which have been already referred to.<sup>1</sup> Since the human environment has remained practically the same from the beginning of the race, it is claimed that human evolution has been due to the development of internal capacity rather than to the action of external forces. In other words, the control of conditions has come through the attainment of knowledge. And the attainment of knowledge with regard to external conditions is nothing more than the becoming conscious of our own capacities for action; it is just to the extent that we know ourselves that we are able to deal with the external conditions. But knowing ourselves means above all things knowing what we want to do, what ideals we wish to realise. Ideals are the projection into the future of inherent capacities; they indicate the direction in which our nature is growing, the ends which it is endeavouring to realise, and in which it would find a complete, harmonious, and effective coördination of its several powers. Accordingly, when we find ourselves hindered in the attainment of our object, it is because we do not know exactly what our object is; in other words, we are not completely self-conscious with regard to our desires and purposes. If a writer finds difficulty in expressing himself in language, it is because the thought that he wishes to express is not yet clear. If an inventor finds difficulty in constructing a working model, it is because he is not yet quite clear with regard to the end which his device is meant to fulfil. And so, an idealist would say, the conditions with which we have to deal are not anything fixed and external, and therefore insuperable, but simply the absence of a complete knowledge of ourselves. If the day labourer, or the settler in a wild region, who feels himself surrounded by prohibitive conditions, and thus condemned to a narrow and unsatisfactory form of existence, were completely self-conscious with regard to his desires and

<sup>1</sup> p. 243.

his capacities, the conditions would be immediately overcome. And if society as a whole were completely conscious of the social needs, and of the social possibilities in the form of coöperation, there would no longer be any conflict between self and environment ; the environment, as an external limiting condition, would no longer exist.

Now there is no doubt a certain practical advantage to be derived from taking this view of the situation. At any rate the attainment of self-consciousness with regard to our purposes constitutes an important factor in the practical solution of the problem. And very often, when we once become aware of this aspect of the difficulty, the problem is as good as solved. This is particularly true of the problem of 'expression' in the narrower sense. We feel that we know what we mean but cannot find the proper form of expression, until, in the search for the form, it dawns upon us that our meaning was not really clear,—after which we are on the direct road to a solution. But we may be aware of the location of the difficulty and yet not be able to remove it. And certainly the mere assumption that the difficulty is in ourselves is not going to solve the life problem as a whole. For, granting that the conditions are all included in ourselves, and will therefore be removed with the attainment of self-consciousness, we have still to ask just *how* this self-consciousness is to be attained. The unskilled day labourer, for example, finds himself, in a matter of wages, at the mercy of the employers. The idealist tells him that, if he were fully aware of his own capacities, he could control his destinies. But how is he to attain this self-consciousness? And what is the first thing for him to do in his present situation? To these questions of how and what, we obtain no satisfactory answer. We are told that the difficulty is in ourselves, and since it would seem that we ought to be able to control ourselves more readily than external conditions, we appear at first sight to have arrived at a solution. But a moment's reflection shows us that the problem of controlling ourselves, of mak-

ing our thoughts and purposes clear, of seeing things in their true relations and appreciating them at their just value, is just as perplexing as the problem of controlling external conditions. We have then done very little more than to change the location of the problem.

#### 5. IDEALISM AND HEDONISM

We may then summarise the advantages and the difficulties of the two theories as follows: The idealist offers certainly a more satisfactory account of the higher morality and of the point of view of more cultivated and conscientious men. This is a fact which must not be obscured by the foregoing criticism. We cannot say that because the idealistic theory is vague it is therefore without meaning. On the contrary, the idealistic expressions to the effect that we are rational beings and not mechanical objects, that our activity is conscious and purposive rather than purely mechanical, that it should be directed toward a full and harmonious realisation of our capacities rather than toward the satisfaction of sense, all awaken in us certain appreciations of truth and reality. And these appreciations furnish us with a moral motive and serve to an extent as a guide to our conduct. We are conscious to some degree of what self-realisation means, though we are unable to state it clearly; and we are quite clear with regard to many of the things which it excludes. But upon the basis of these appreciations alone we cannot construct a scientific system of morality. For this purpose we require a clearer and more concrete statement, — ultimately a mathematical statement, both of ends and conditions, — such a statement, indeed, as is aimed at by hedonism. Yet, when we turn to hedonism, we encounter a form of theory which is inadequate on the other side. It is relatively clear and concrete, but ignores a great part of that which our common sense judges to be of value, — and just that which we judge to have the highest value. It works fairly well for the lower portion of the moral scale, but fails to

account for the values expressed in the upper portion. The difference between the two theories amounts, then, to this : idealism offers a more comprehensive conception of moral value, but fails to define its conception in concrete detail or to show its application to existing conditions ; hedonism offers a system of computation, which may be applied to existing conditions, but whose unit of value is inadequate for the computation of all the factors of the moral life.

## CHAPTER XV

### IDEALISTIC SOCIAL THEORY AND COMMON SENSE

#### 1. SELF-REALISATION AND DUTY

IN undertaking an evaluation of the idealistic theory of social relations, we find ourselves confronted by the difficulty of stating our problem in the form of a single concrete question. In chapter xii the idealistic conception of duty to one's neighbour was seen to be contained in the general command to treat all human beings (including self) as rational beings, and the various implications involved in this general principle were there shown in detail. But it is difficult to bring all the details together into a single explicit statement, or to state the problem in a single question which will immediately suggest all its various aspects. It will therefore be clearer and less awkward to distinguish the various aspects of the problem and to treat them somewhat separately. (*a*) The command to treat all men as rational beings involves, in the first place, as regards myself, the command to behave like a rational being, — which means that I am to behave like one who has a personal ideal to realise. The first question, then, is this: how far is self-realisation, regarded as the realisation of a personal ideal, consistent with duty, or with genuine social welfare? (*b*) Again, it means that I am to treat other persons as rational beings, *i.e.* as beings who are capable of appreciating the value of objects and who will act accordingly. Therefore, our second question is, How far does our duty admit of this attitude toward others? (*c*) It means, further, that to realise my personal ideal is at the same time to respect the personal ideals of

others. And this raises the third question, How far does self-respect, or faithfulness to my personal ideal, involve a similar respect for others? (*d*) Finally, we remember that the idealist sums up the whole matter of social duty in an impersonal regard for the strictly reasonable. How far, then, is the strictly impersonal attitude in accordance with duty? These questions are of course not mutually exclusive, and it will not be possible to treat them as such; they are distinguished merely for convenience.

All four questions may be answered with the statement that self-realisation and duty are identical to the extent that the relations between men are personal rather than commercial, — that is, to the extent that they rest upon common sympathies and appreciations rather than upon an organised standard of value. This formulation may be regarded as the social application of the generalisation reached in the last chapter, and must be considered in relation to the corresponding estimate of hedonistic theory, made in chapter viii, where it was shown that the validity of the hedonistic theory of social relations is limited mainly to the more elementary moral activities in which the relations of men are commercial and rest upon a relatively definite measure of value. Now the antithesis of commercial, or ‘business,’ relations is personal relations. The personal relations cover all those which arise between men when they leave the market-place and turn their attention to objects other than those involved in making a living. As such they are the relations which exist between men so far as they are engaged in cultivating the more human side of life, in which they may be regarded as men of culture and gentlemen. Every man, to the extent that the conditions of his existence leave room for the cultivation of personal sympathies, may be regarded as a man of culture and a gentleman. In ‘a *more* cultivated man’ we simply distinguish one who, for some reason, has reached a more complete development of his nature, and who, through a larger appreciation of the



content and meaning of human life, is capable of a larger range of personal sympathy. This larger range of sympathy is what we have in mind when we speak of the higher culture as a 'broad' culture, and of the pursuits of art and literature as a cultivation of the 'humanities.' All the social relations involved in the higher cultural activities may then be regarded as personal; in so far as a man has reached a certain stage of culture he has established a basis of mutual appreciation between himself and all others who have reached the same stage.

(a) *Self-respect and Duty*

This general principle may now be applied to the first of our special questions, to that, namely, which asks how far the realisation of personal ideals is consistent with duty. Stated more concretely, the question would be, How far is the satisfaction of a fine sense of honour a fulfilment of the demands of practical morality? Now it seems clear that, as long as we confine our attention to the circle of personal relations, a fine sense of honour on the part of an individual is in every respect an advantage for all concerned. In that most intimate of personal relations, the marriage relation, where the life of one person is so completely and so intricately interwoven with that of another, it is practically indispensable, both for the perfection of personal sympathy and for the successful conduct of common material interests, that there should be the highest degree of mutual trust and confidence. And there can be no doubt that, in such relations, a high sense of honour on the part of one results in a similar attitude on the part of the other, while an attitude of suspicion on the one side creates for the other the temptation to adopt the same attitude. And we may say generally that where men come into intimate relations they are more ready to appreciate and to respect an attitude of strict honour, and that such an attitude on the part of one tends inevitably to beget a similar attitude, toward him-

self at least, on the part of the other. Consequently a man with a fine sense of honour makes a better husband, father, and friend ; he is better not only for the more spiritual purposes of personal sympathy but for all the purposes of mutual assistance and coöperation.

It is evident, however, that a man may carry a sense of honour too far, and so far, indeed, as to convert an attitude which is primarily highly ideal into one of selfish indulgence. Devotion to an ideal—and to a true and genuine ideal—may be carried to the extent of ignoring the more immediate and imperative aspects of his duty. It is very difficult to state the point at which such devotion ceases to be a duty, and hence very difficult to cite a case upon which all would agree. Let us, however, consider the following. All the professions—theology, medicine, art, education, and even law—have this in common, that they undertake to study and to state certain departments of truth. Strict duty would seem, then, to demand that a man be faithful at any cost to the truth as he sees it. But an absolute devotion to truth will be in some cases impossible. For, as a rule, men in the professions depend upon their fees or their salaries for their livelihood ; and it is possible that one's views may be so far in advance of his generation, or of his immediate social environment, as to deprive him of recognition and ultimately of the means of livelihood. This is true to an extent of every more intelligent man engaged in a profession ; somewhere he is obliged to compromise with his ideals if he is to secure, not comfort and luxury, but a mere livelihood. Now if he be the fortunate possessor of an independent income, he is relieved of the necessity of making concessions. But it is doubtful if he is relieved of the *duty* of making concessions. For of what value is a higher ideal standpoint if it secures no recognition ? You may say that truth is mighty and must prevail, but surely it will not prevail unless it be known, nor will it be known unless it be sufficiently within the grasp of men to

secure their attention. What may be merely doubtful here seems no longer doubtful for a man who depends upon his salary or fees for the support of his family. He has the right, of course, to expect from his family a certain sympathy, if not indeed a complete sympathy, with his ideals and a certain willingness to make sacrifices for them; but clearly there is a limit to which the welfare of family may be sacrificed to personal ideals. In order to maintain my self-respect, to satisfy my sense of honour, to speak the truth as I see it, it may be necessary to deprive my children of the opportunity for a decent education or, possibly, of the necessities of life, while, on the other hand, this devotion to truth may be only faintly appreciated by my neighbours, and contribute very little to the real elevation of social standards. Surely there is a limit to which such sacrifices may be reconciled with a genuine morality. Evidently there is a point at which the satisfaction of personal ideals, however worthy in themselves, has ceased to be a duty and has become a mere selfish indulgence.

Another illustration is to be found in the life of a business man. We have seen that, where values are fully known and human relations fully organised upon a commercial basis, a man is compelled by considerations of self-interest alone to give a just return for what he receives. But completeness of organisation is true at best of only a limited field of commercial relations. In many aspects of commercial life there is opportunity for the unscrupulous man to secure an undue advantage in dealing with others, while at the same time he who satisfies a high sense of honour will receive less than his due.<sup>1</sup> Now there

<sup>1</sup> Regarding all social conditions from the standpoint of organisation upon a commercial basis, it is convenient for purposes of concrete treatment to recognise three grades of organisation: (1) the highly organised conditions surrounding the rank and file; (2) the semi-organised, covering the activity of the masters, or 'business men'; (3) the relatively unorganised, relating to the exchange of personal services and sympathies. The demands of practical morality are covered in (1) by the hedonistic rule of self-interest, in (3) by the idealistic rule of self-respect, while both are to an extent applicable to (2).

can be no doubt that to a certain extent the man who carries a high ideal of honour into his business relations will, though at some loss to himself, contribute to the welfare of his community. For every effort in this direction tends to raise the standard of commercial morals, and thus to facilitate the process of exchange and to further the well-being of men generally. But there is a point beyond which the sacrifice of self-interest required by a high standard of honour will be no longer effective, — beyond which one's attitude will be no longer appreciated and respected. And beyond this point a man will be operating at a heavy loss to himself without a corresponding gain to the community. In selling a house or a horse to a friend, a man who makes any claim to be a 'man of honour,' or a 'gentleman,' will be careful to inform his friend of his reasons for wishing to part with his property, or of any circumstances which could conceivably render the object in question an undesirable investment. Such a transaction is spoken of as a 'friendly transaction between gentlemen.' But it would be impossible to carry this extent of friendliness into the daily conduct of business. In business the rule is, *caveat emptor*, let the buyer take care of himself. It would be dishonest for me to misrepresent the goods I am offering for sale, but if I happen to possess private knowledge of circumstances which will reduce the future value of the goods offered, this knowledge is my legitimate gain, and it is the buyer's legitimate gain if he has good private ground for believing that the price will rise. The meaning of the rule is not absolutely definite, and even in business circles there is some doubt as to the nature and amount of the knowledge which a man may honestly keep to himself; and no doubt a right-minded man will interpret the rule as loosely as possible in favour of the higher rule observed in his more personal relations. But the rule cannot be absolutely ignored. In business, as elsewhere, there are established usages and established rules of method, and these rules must be observed if we are to transact business at all. You cannot, in the long run,

give better treatment than you may expect to receive in return. A merchant who should insist upon doing so would soon be bankrupt and deprived of further opportunity for business activity. He might then enjoy the satisfaction of personal rectitude, but as long as he refused to transact business upon terms that other men were willing to recognise, he could not be said to be contributing to the welfare of society, or in any genuine sense to be performing his duty. We must then admit it to be a fact that, however repulsive it be to a right-minded man to be other than a gentleman in any of his relations with others, he cannot, without much qualification, carry the ideal of a gentleman into his business relations; and since the activities of commerce and industry are vitally important for human welfare, we must admit that a man cannot do his share in the work of the world without to some extent sacrificing his personal ideals.

The sense of honour may be compared with the æsthetic senses, or with the lower senses of taste and smell. A man in whom these senses are finely developed will undoubtedly contribute to the welfare of those immediately about him. He will make the life of his family and of his friends more beautiful, more human, and ultimately more wholesome, and his ideals will have their due effect upon the condition of society generally. But there comes a point at which a fine taste, or at least an insistence upon its demands, will prove only a hindrance to useful activity. It is no doubt a good thing to keep one's hands clean, even using the phrase in its literal sense, and the higher type of man will have the stronger desire for clean hands. In his home and among his friends a man may keep his hands clean, and we may also insist upon it as a duty. We may further insist that he keep his hands as clean as possible in all his occupations. But clearly a man who does his share of the world's work cannot always have clean hands. And the same is true from the standpoint of an ideal personal morality. A man who insists upon an absolute satisfaction of his ideal must withdraw from the world

and refuse to share its work ; if he does his part as a member of society he will be obliged to do some things which are morally repulsive.

(b) *Duty and Respect for Others*

Our second question asks how far it is our duty to act upon the assumption of the rationality of others. I believe that we do not commonly appreciate the ethical importance of this assumption. We recognise, in a general way, that the parent or the teacher is more successful who understands his child's point of view, that the employer of labour is more successful who can see the situation from the labour standpoint, and that the man who is generally more open-minded and ready to consider all sides of a disputed question, is the man who is more likely to effect a just settlement. But we do not ordinarily appreciate the extent to which it is the absence of this attitude, and nothing else, which stands in the way of a proper adjustment of social relations. One reason for this is the fact that the maintenance of such an attitude is a rare and difficult accomplishment. For to treat men as rational beings is not merely to make an abstract assumption ; on the contrary, it involves the active repression of some of the strongest passions of our nature. When I find another resisting my wishes, the mere fact of resistance tends to arouse in me a passion to carry my point without regard to its right or wrong. And if the resistance continue, I may soon cease to think of the question of right and wrong, or, very likely, the heat of passion will itself bring about the illusion that, in fighting for my selfish interests, I am standing for divine right, and for a cause which is not merely my own but that of humanity as a whole. It is very difficult, in the heat of conflict, for a man to conceive it possible that his antagonist may also be acting under the conviction that he is fighting for the right, much less that he would be satisfied with a just settlement of the difficulty, provided it were effected on strictly reasonable grounds and without personal degradation. And yet, when one finds the courage and self-



control to take this attitude toward another — to take it frankly and sincerely — he usually finds the other ready to meet him more than half way. Generally speaking, when we put the idealistic theory of the ultimate reasonableness of human nature to an experimental test, the confirmation is larger than we expect. It is very largely true that an attitude of confidence toward others tends to bring about a similar attitude toward ourselves, while an attitude of distrust tends to make men untrustworthy.

It is evident, however, that there is a limit to which the adoption of this attitude is practically possible. Granting, with the idealist, that men are fundamentally rational and will respond ultimately to an unprejudiced statement of their duty, we have still to note that there are limits within which it is possible to make such a statement. If nothing else, there are limits of space and time. A parent who may wish to treat his child as a rational being, and who may be willing to take the trouble to explain to him carefully the ground for that which he is bidden to do, will nevertheless meet with cases where there is no time for such explanation, and where, perhaps to save the child's life, it is necessary to issue peremptory commands and to enforce them, if necessary, with violence. So again, in our relations with men generally, we have to take into consideration the extent of common understanding with which a transaction begins. We may perhaps concede that all men are ultimately in harmony, if we mean only that, given a sufficient period of close association, any two individuals may come to understand each other. But there are some pairs of individuals who would not learn to understand each other in an ordinary lifetime, while others may establish a complete sympathy in the shake of a hand.

Hence, we may say that the advisability of treating others as rational beings will depend upon the extent to which those with whom we deal are intelligent and enlightened men, or upon the extent to which we are intimately associated with them. It is clear that a man ought to maintain this attitude toward his family and friends, and to carry it as far as possible into all his social

relations. But somewhere among those with whom he is less intimately associated, there will be a point beyond which it will be his duty to limit his attitude of confidence, provisionally at least, and to be on his guard against possible aggression. For there are some men with whom it will be impossible to arrive at a common understanding, men who, apparently, have no regard for what is just but are bent only upon furthering their own advantage, and who will deliberately betray any confidence shown them. And there comes a point beyond which an attitude of confidence is not only ineffective in raising the moral standard of the community, but involves a neglect of immediate and imperative duties. A merchant who should trust every customer would shortly be bankrupt, and no longer capable of fulfilling either his duty to his children as father, or his duty to society as merchant.

The same is true of international relations. In nearly all cases the intelligent and right-minded citizen will be on the side of peace ; he will not only discourage military pretension, but will prefer that his country should accept some disadvantages, and even insults, rather than disturb the peace. But clearly there is a limit to which duty will justify this attitude. Any one who assumes that military helplessness will be a sure protection against foreign aggression has his eyes closed to the facts. A nation which should maintain this ideal attitude in its completeness would surely invite foreign invasion ; and since the attack would probably be made by a nation of lower ideals and inferior civilisation, the result might be to retard the whole course of civilisation. This is exactly the situation in which the other nations of continental Europe find themselves to-day with regard to Russia.

### *(c) Self-respect and Respect for Others*

In replying to our first two questions, it would seem that we had already given the answer to the third. But there remains a point demanding separate consideration. It is sometimes said

that a man cannot respect himself without implying a corresponding disrespect for others, that the value even of a moral ideal depends upon the extent to which it creates an invidious distinction between those who hold it and those whose ideals are lower. In the more vulgar expressions of self-respect, where a man thinks it incumbent upon him as a gentleman to live in a certain neighbourhood, to wear a silk hat to church and a dress coat to dinner, it seems that the whole value of the object lies in the fact of invidious distinction ; for if all men could wear silk hats and dress coats, there would be no meaning in wearing them, and if all neighbourhoods were fashionable, none would be fashionable. It is then argued that the more refined forms of self-respect rest upon the same motive. A man may despise the vulgar distinction of fashionable neighbourhoods and silk hats ; he may prefer a quiet and unfashionable neighbourhood and a modest and unassuming dress. But now, it is said, he is only asserting a finer and more exclusive distinction ; he now claims a superiority not merely to the common, unfashionable crowd but to the fashionable crowd itself. The same is said of the man who adheres to a high standard of personal honour ; he finds his satisfaction in the fact that a rigid devotion to truth places him among the morally élite, and distinguishes him from the meaner spirits whose sense of honour is dull. If all men were equally devoted to the truth, a high sense of honour would have no value. Hence, it is argued, self-respect is in its very nature incompatible with a respect for humanity as such.<sup>1</sup>

The argument just stated assumes that where an object or form of activity confers a distinction, the distinction must be that which constitutes the motive. Apparently it takes no account of the fact that the possession of an object could not confer a distinction unless it were an object of superior intrinsic value, or, at any rate, that the distinction would not be valued

<sup>1</sup> The motive of 'invidious distinction' has been exhaustively analysed in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, by Thorstein Veblen.

unless the object were conceived as such. For one who thinks only of constant change of fashions and the absurd and grotesque character of many of the forms of dress and behaviour which are set up as a badge of respectability, it is natural to assume that anything might serve this purpose, provided only that its possession were exclusive. But we have to remember that, from the standpoint of those who follow the fashions, however it may be from the standpoint of the observer, all of these objects represent intrinsic value. They satisfy the requirements of æsthetic taste. The taste in question may be a mere whim of the moment, but nevertheless it is for the time being sincere. No one cares to distinguish himself by wearing a hat that is *merely* absurd, nor is it conceivable that extraordinary filth should ever become a basis of fashionable distinction. And the more persistent badges of respectability have always some real value. For example, we criticise the dress coat as unbecoming and ugly, but we have to admit that, within our circle of possible garments, there is no other form of dress for men which is so conveniently expressive of freshness and cleanliness, and therefore no other which is so appropriate for formal wear.

It is also important to remember that the possession of an object of high intrinsic value necessarily confers a distinction upon the possessor. For objects of the highest value are necessarily rare. And their high value lies not in their rarity (in which case the statement just made would be merely tautological), but in the extent to which they represent an adaptation of means to ends. In the situation as we have it, where demands are unlimited and conditions inadequate, it follows that the conditions which most nearly meet the demands will be generally the rarest. The perfectly fitting coats, as well as the most beautiful diamonds, will be the fewest. And so of the sense of honour. The more exacting its demands, the fewer will be those who will be able to satisfy them. It will thus necessarily follow that one who sets his standard of honour

high, will create a relatively exclusive and relatively invidious distinction between himself and others. Since, however, the demand for distinction and the demand for intrinsic values lead largely to the same external attitude, it remains at least an open question as to how far the motive is contained in one or the other.

Referring the question to experience, it seems that the motive is one or the other — invidious or disinterested — to the extent that men stand lower or higher in the scale of culture and intelligence, or to the extent that the other persons who are supposed to be unfavourably distinguished by our conduct stand in remote or intimate relations to us. The last clause of the statement may be dismissed with the observation that even those who claim that our motive is that of creating an invidious distinction will admit that our chief motive is to distinguish ourselves from a lower class, not from our own and presumably higher class. Turning to the first clause, we may begin by admitting that invidious motives enter very largely into our activity. One who studies the manners and customs of fashionable life cannot fail to note a large element of social rivalry (though he must not suppose that fashionable life is peculiar in this respect). If he turn from the fashionable to a higher class of more truly intelligent and cultivated persons, he will find that, while in this class the social rivalries of the fashionable are condemned as vulgar, and while to a really cultivated person the thought of entering a contest for social or other honours is clearly repulsive, yet there will be very few who will not, in the privacy of their own thought, congratulate themselves upon their superiority to those who stoop to such a contest. And probably there is no one so disinterestedly devoted to high ideals or so sincerely contemptuous of individual and invidious distinctions, that he does not find in the thought of the latter some added stimulus to the realisation of his ideals. Nevertheless, it seems clear that, as we go upward in the cultural scale, the love of individual distinction becomes

a constantly diminishing quantity. Admitting that there are few persons who do not derive some satisfaction from a sense of superiority to others, we must still observe that, as we approach those of the highest culture, we find increasing numbers who despise this form of self-satisfaction, and who despise themselves whenever they are conscious of yielding to the temptation. And it is not without significance that, even in fashionable life, the fact of social rivalry is at least concealed under the external form of sympathy; for these social forms, however empty they may often be in practice, are at any rate indicative of the direction of our ideals. And when we have the good fortune to meet with a really chivalrous character, in whom our conception of a gentleman is finally realised, it is in him that we find the most sincerely generous attitude toward all his fellows. Indeed, it may be said that while in practice the conception of a gentleman necessarily implies an invidious distinction, the realisation of the ideal is possible only for one who has gone so far beyond the distinction as to be no longer troubled by it.

(d) *Respect for Private Interests*

It remains only to transpose the foregoing into the point of view of our fourth and last question: how far is the strictly impersonal attitude in accordance with duty? It will hardly be doubted that the impersonal is ideally the higher and more dignified attitude. Certainly it is the nobler mind that can forget the narrower considerations of reputation and profit, and think only of the broader ends of humanity; and though there seems at first sight to be a certain virtue in respecting the sensibilities and private needs of others, yet upon reflection it becomes clear that the necessity for such concessions involves on both sides a certain loss of moral dignity. But when we attempt to put the impersonal attitude into practice we find, here as before, that it is practicable only to the extent that there is a basis of common sympathy. Under normal condi-



tions, it will work well enough within the family and home ; we meet many cases of family life where each one fully identifies the family interests with his own, where the apportionment of duties and responsibilities fulfils the conditions of maximum efficiency alone, and where the question of *meum* and *tuum* is never raised. But when the activity calls for coöperation within a larger group, we find that, except as the group is composed of the more enlightened and broad-minded, private interests are everywhere more or less in evidence. It seems impossible to coöperate, even for a distinctly disinterested end, such as public charity or social reform, without having the results modified and delayed by the claims of private interests. One man wishes his judgment to be accepted as final, another wishes his name prominently mentioned, a third has business interests to be guarded or religious prejudices to be satisfied, while a fourth may hope to make money out of it. And where the object in question is a public measure of national concern, we find the attitude of men and parties determined largely by the interests of their own state or city, — except, indeed, at the time of some great sorrow or calamity, when, for the moment, the thought of local interest is lost in a feeling of common brotherhood.

It is to be remembered, however, that, under existing conditions, the demands of private interest may have a legitimate moral basis. Unless our duty is based in some sense upon self-interest, the notion of obligation rests upon the air.<sup>1</sup> Nor is this consideration ignored by idealism ; the idealistic theory assumes that the social interests will be found to be identical with those of the larger and truer self. Now from an ideal standpoint, we may perhaps despise the man whose self-interest takes the narrower form of private profit ; but before making our estimate final, we must consider the attitude of those with whom he has to deal. So far as my neighbours show a disposition to take an impersonal view of their social duties, there is

<sup>1</sup> See p. 150.

no excuse for my own attitude being any less so ; for that matter, from the standpoint of a really positive morality, I should endeavour to make it always more so. But when I have to deal with others whose point of view does not extend beyond their selfish interests — or, when one locality deals with others whose tone and temper is obstinately selfish — the completely impersonal attitude becomes of itself unreasonable. To stand by it is not to realise a larger self, but completely to abnegate any self whatever.

It is evident, then, that under existing conditions, duty will demand some respect for private interests. In some cases these private claims will be recognised as legitimate, in others as wholly illegitimate. But even the latter will often require consideration. However unworthy these petty interests may appear to a more generous man, it will be his duty to give them more or less consideration, and to modify the ends regarded as desirable in order to meet the conditions of coöperation. In other words, unless he be willing to withdraw from the world and to take the attitude of a mere spectator, he will find it necessary to be to some extent ‘ diplomatic,’ — to show respect for claims which appear to him contemptible and for sensibilities which seem puerile, and to sacrifice the impersonally desirable in their favour.

Looking at the idealistic social theory as a whole, we may say that the extent of its validity as a theory of conduct depends upon the actual range of common sympathies, — upon the extent to which men partake of the same point of view. Now the extent of common understanding rests upon two conditions : the external condition of propinquity and the internal condition of an equal degree of culture. Looking at society externally, we find men separated geographically into groups. And the geographical groupings represent to some extent the groupings according to sympathies. It is inevitable that, in general, men bred under the same external conditions, facing the same prob-

lems, and coming, moreover, largely from the same parent stock, should have a better understanding of each other than those bred under different conditions. And therefore it will follow that, other things equal, men of the same community will be able to repose a superior confidence in each other, and will also have a superior claim upon each other; and it will be possible to treat each other as men and brothers—as rational beings—where, with outsiders, it will be necessary to be on one's guard. But the geographical classification is not final. It is crossed by the classification of men according to their degree of culture; and, though the geographical conditions have been mainly instrumental in determining individual sympathies in the past, and still determine them very largely, yet, owing to the constantly increasing ease of communication, they are more and more giving way to the cultural conditions, rendering even the national lines of less importance than the community of taste and occupation. It follows, then, that men of the same grade of culture will, without regard to national distinctions, have a better mutual understanding than men of different grades, and at the same time a correspondingly stronger claim upon each other. If, now, we suppose all these distinctions removed, and men to be no longer divided, either geographically by distance or culturally by different degrees of taste and intelligence, we reach a condition of perfect and complete mutual understanding, in which the idealistic theory of our duty to our fellowmen becomes absolutely and universally valid. But until these conditions are reached—if ever they are—its validity can only be relative. And in the meantime the situation stands—to put it bluntly—as follows: To deceive a fellow-man, or to make a tool of him, is under any circumstances repulsive; but there are cases where one must do so, and where it would be a breach of duty to do otherwise. But, granting it to be in some cases justifiable, it is less justifiable toward a friend than a stranger, toward a man of honour than a rascal.

## 2. THE CONDITIONS OF AN IDEALISTIC SOCIETY

The complete validity of the idealistic ethical theory presupposes a completely idealistic society. Now an idealistic society, in the full sense, would be one in which all the relations between men were purely personal, in which all social relations were adjusted upon the basis of common sympathies rather than upon the basis of exchange ; and this would be equivalent to a community composed entirely of gentlemen and men of culture as distinct from business men. To a certain extent the conditions necessary for the existence of such a society are realised in the present social order ; and to a certain extent, also, where the conditions prevail, the ideal is realised. At first sight we are disposed to resist the conclusion that the possession of an independent income confers a moral advantage ; and we very commonly take the opposite conclusion for granted and assume that wealth necessarily leads to selfishness and immorality. But here we are influenced rather by an ideal conception of what things ought to be than by an impartial consideration of what things are ; we feel that, at any rate, it *ought* not to be true that a man should derive an advantage in the development of his moral character from an accidental circumstance, such as the possession of wealth, or that those who bear the heavier burdens should find their burdens a moral disadvantage. Now it is true that in many cases wealth is used merely as a means for escaping the usual penalties of immoral conduct, and thus as an opportunity for a greater extent of immoral indulgence. No doubt the prominence given to scandals in 'high life' causes us to forget the number of similar scandals in the conventionally 'lower' life ; and yet it is safe to say that the proportion of such scandals, involving often an insensibility to the most elementary and imperative of moral obligations, is greater among those who live at ease than within the great class of plain, hard-working people. This is the natural result of a life controlled neither by high ideals nor by ordinary

penalties. But where the possessor of wealth is a man of high ideals, the result is very different; and we find under these conditions a development of the idealistic social virtues — honour, generosity, a broad human sympathy, and a respect for the rights of others — which is hardly to be found under other conditions. It is not meant that these virtues are always impossible under less favourable conditions; for they are sometimes most conspicuous where the conditions are most difficult. But their very conspicuousness shows that under the less favourable conditions they are not to be generally expected. It is useless to deny that poverty does not breed sympathy. A constant pressure of material wants tends generally to make a man's life sordid, to render his point of view narrow and selfish, to dull his appreciation of the more ideal requirements of honour and generosity. For the development of these higher virtues it is necessary, generally speaking, that the provision for the animal necessities should be to an extent secure; and for their highest development it is necessary that their provision should be so far secure as to enable a man to banish to the background of his thought the vexing commercial question of *meum* and *tuum*. Thus it happens that most of the noblest expressions of human ideals, as exhibited in our English literature and thought, and many of the most ideal types of human lives, have come from a distinctively leisure class. Our notion of their *merit*, or *desert*, may be modified by a consideration of the favourable conditions under which these lives have been lived, but this need not blind us to their intrinsic value from an ideal standpoint.

### 3. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE IDEALISTIC SOCIAL THEORY

This will enable us to locate the point of difficulty in the idealistic theory of society. It is clear that the society in which we live is not an idealistic society. And when we ask why not, we find that the ground lies in our physical nature and material

necessities.<sup>1</sup> It has just been suggested that material wants are unfavourable to the development of generosity and sympathy. We may go further and say that, where the supply of material necessities is unequal to the demand, a complete harmony of individual interests is meaningless and absurd. For the individual is, after all, whatever else he may be, a physical individual, and his individual interests necessarily include his physical interests. But where there is not enough to satisfy the physical needs of all persons, it follows that some persons will be satisfied at the expense of others. Accordingly, a regard for his own well-being will compel each to act in such a manner as to make sure that he is not one of those to be left out in the general distribution, and consequently to make sure that a certain measure of deprivation falls to the lot of another. Now this is where we stand in our present situation. Roughly speaking, there is never enough food to go around, or, at any rate, not enough of the sort to keep every one in a state of reasonably good health. And the provision for the other necessities is similarly insufficient. Under these conditions it becomes meaningless to say that the interests of all are completely identical. The best possible solution of the social problem must be to an extent a compromise, — an arrangement by which each agrees to sacrifice a certain extent of his claims in return for a similar sacrifice on the part of others, — an arrangement, it must be noted, which is very different from a complete acceptance of the interests of others as identical with our own. In brief, then, the fact that we are physical beings, with an incomplete supply of physical necessities, renders our society to some extent a hedonistic, commercial society, in which the relations of men are necessarily

<sup>1</sup> For example, the aristocratic circles of ancient Greece, through whom mainly the culture of Greece has come to us, may properly be said to have constituted in themselves an idealistic society, since the material necessities were provided by slave labour; and it was to this fact, no doubt, that the culture of Greece owed its existence,



relations of exchange, and to which the idealistic conception of a community of interests is inapplicable.

The idealist meets this difficulty with the claim that the insufficiency of the supply of material necessities is purely illusory. In reality, he tells us, there is plenty for all. The difficulty is not in the source of supply, but in the failure of men to make an economical use of the material. This failure is a failure to coöperate intelligently and effectively. And the failure to coöperate is ultimately a failure to arrive at a complete mutual sympathy and understanding. He points to the modern organisation of industry as an illustration of what is accomplished when large bodies of men work together for the attainment of a single purpose. It may be stated roughly that the results of coöperation increase in a geometrical ratio where the ratio of increase in the numbers engaged is merely arithmetical. And it is not too much to say that, if men as a whole were acting in complete and harmonious coöperation, no human desire would remain unsatisfied. If, then (he holds), there is a scarcity of material necessities, it is because we do not completely appreciate the identity of our interests; it is because our attitude toward each other is an attitude of suspicion. If we once accept the theory of identical interests as a working hypothesis, and endeavour fully to understand each other and to coöperate for our common ends, we shall find the *conception* of harmony converted, as the result of our coöperation, into a realised fact.

Just here we arrive at the point of difficulty. We may easily assent to the general affirmation of a harmony of interests. Indeed, it is in some sense self-evident. But the question is, In what does the harmony consist? What are we all working for, and just how are our individual interests related to each other? And then there is the practical question: where are we to begin? And what is *my* duty as a particular individual in this particular situation? To these questions the idealistic theory furnishes no answer. The difficulty in the idealistic

social theory is thus the same that we have found in the idealistic theory generally. It fails to state our duty in terms that may be applied to our particular situation. In other words, it fails to work out its principle into a system of fact and detail. It tells us that society is an organism of which each individual is a function, and that, in consequence, the welfare of the organism as a whole requires the welfare of each individual, while, conversely, the welfare of each demands the welfare of the whole. But it fails, in the first place, to state the nature of the purpose which constitutes the organic unity, and in the second place to state how the several functions are to coöperate for the attainment of the purpose. As a result, it offers a conception of society which is relatively obscure from the standpoint of theory and relatively unworkable from the standpoint of practice.

To state the relations between the alternative social theories is then simply to repeat, with reference to social relations, the general statement made at the close of our last chapter. The idealistic theory offers a more comprehensive statement of our relations to each other, and one which more adequately accounts for their higher aspects as seen in the more personal relations,—that is, in all relations between men so far as they stand higher in the cultural scale. But its statement is not clear and concrete. Now a really clear statement would be a mathematical computation of social relations expressed in terms of self-interest ; and a basis of computation is proposed by hedonism. But, as we have seen, its conception of self, and of self-interest, fails to account for the breadth and complexity of the self to be defined ; and its computation of social relations, while applicable to the simpler commercial relations, becomes inadequate when applied to the more complex and personal. Idealism offers, then, a relatively comprehensive but vague conception of the self and of social relations, hedonism a clear but relatively narrow conception.

## PART III

### HEDONISM AND IDEALISM: THE MORAL SITUATION



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SITUATION FROM A METAPHYSICAL STANDPOINT

#### 1. THE NECESSITY FOR A COÖRDINATION OF THEORY

HAVING completed our analysis and criticism of ethical theory, we have now to attempt a coördination of the alternative views from some common standpoint. It will be remembered that we began, in chapter ii, with an outline statement of the ethical problem, showing that there appears to be a contradiction between moral ideals and the conditions of practical attainment, and showing further that an emphasis laid upon the side of ideals or of conditions gives rise respectively to the theories of idealism and hedonism. Our analysis of the two theories has shown them to be the expressions of fundamentally opposite ways of looking at things,—of fundamentally opposite temperaments and systems of philosophy; and our criticism has shown that while each has a certain range of application, neither is able to fulfil all the requirements of an ethical and psychological system. So far, then, we have seen no possibility of combining the two theories in a single systematic point of view. It is impossible, however, that our thought should rest in the mere contemplation of differences and contradictions,—impossible both from a theoretical and from a practical standpoint. From a theoretical standpoint we are compelled by a necessity of our thought to assume that our world is ultimately a unity. It is inconceivable that there be two distinct and unrelated worlds, such as an ideal world and a material world; we are compelled to assume either that one of them is a fiction or that they are not wholly unrelated.

And, from a practical standpoint, we find ourselves in the presence of a necessity for immediate action, and, hence, in need of a decided plan of action. We cannot stop at the mere contemplation of a contradiction ; we must find some way of dealing with it.

Now a complete solution of the ethical problem is, according to my view, quite out of the question. We cannot fit the different sides of the problem together, term for term, and detail for detail, in such a manner as to form a completely articulated system. Nor can we even, in any completely adequate manner, define a method for putting them together. And in the absence of a detailed and articulated system it is a mere empty statement to say, with popular philosophy, that the two sides of the problem are but 'the two sides of the shield,' or, with Fechner, that they are related as convex to concave, and hence necessarily harmonious. So far as we believe that each represents an aspect of reality (which is the view taken here), such harmony is assumed as a postulate of our thought. But for this very reason it means nothing to repeat it. The assertion of harmony conveys no information except as we can take up the apparently conflicting aspects of reality and join them together in concrete detail.

But in the absence of a completely consistent system, and of a completely satisfactory solution of the moral problem, we may still, I believe, through a critical adjustment of the claims of the alternative theories, construct a reasonably satisfactory working hypothesis, such as will enable us to define our general attitude toward the different elements in the moral situation. It is such an adjustment that I have in mind in the remaining four chapters, — a working hypothesis rather than a final solution, — a *critical* adjustment of the opposing theories, such as will enable us to take a practical attitude toward the aspects of life which they severally represent, without closing our eyes to the fact that we are not yet able to unite these aspects in all their concrete detail.



We shall begin, in the present chapter, with an analysis of the moral situation from a metaphysical standpoint. The 'moral situation' includes, of course, the relations of the conflicting theories and of the factors in the moral problem which they severally represent. And by 'metaphysical' analysis is meant an analysis of the fundamental conceptions underlying the two points of view, regarded as bare conceptions, *i.e.* considered apart from the possibility of their concrete application to the world of fact and experience. To appreciate the significance of the metaphysical analysis it will afterwards be necessary to call attention to a comparison of its results with those obtained when the concrete application is made.

## 2. THE ULTIMATELY COMPLEMENTARY CHARACTER OF THE OPPOSING CONCEPTIONS

The first point that requires notice is the complementary character of the conceptions underlying the alternative theories, when carried to their ultimate conclusion, — in other words, the ultimate consistency of the two theories, when viewed from a metaphysical standpoint.

It will be remembered that hedonism was described as a clear but incomplete view, idealism as a more comprehensive but relatively obscure view. Though the hedonist offers a clear view of human nature, he maintains the quality of clearness by ignoring, or, at any rate, minimising, its more complex features. The idealistic view then involves less of an abstraction from the concrete life experience, but fails in turn to reduce this experience to a concrete basis of fact and detail. Now there is no essential contradiction between clearness and comprehensiveness. It may be practically difficult to unite the two qualities in our concrete thought, but this does not mean that the two qualities are essentially incompatible. It is quite conceivable that, with a larger range and capacity for thought, we might attain a view of human nature, and of moral conduct, which would possess at once the clearness of the hedonistic

view and the comprehensiveness of idealism. And in this larger view we might expect to obtain a reconciliation of their mutual contradictions. Now this *a priori* possibility of reconciliation is confirmed, as I shall endeavour to show, by an analysis of the opposing conceptions and an endeavour to conceive of each as making good its deficiencies as a basis of concrete description. When we attempt to make hedonistic conceptions comprehensive, we find that they acquire an idealistic meaning or, at any rate, if not a perfectly clear meaning, an idealistic flavour; and when we attempt to make idealistic conceptions clear, they acquire in a similar manner a hedonistic meaning.

(a) *Mechanism and Consciousness*

The general opposition between hedonism and idealism rests, as we have seen, upon the fundamental distinction between mechanical and conscious action. For hedonism the human being is a machine, — a highly complex machine, to be sure, but still a machine; for idealism he is a conscious personality, acting always with a purpose in view. All the detailed differences in the two theories may be traced ultimately to this difference in their view of human nature.

The practical difference between mechanical and purposive action appears to be as follows: a purposive action is one which maintains a consistent form of activity throughout a great variety of conditions, — which has, therefore, a relatively wide range of readjustment to changing circumstances; a mechanical action is one with a relatively limited range of adjustment, whose character is, therefore, relatively speaking, determined by its circumstances. The distinction is thus, from an empirical standpoint, a question of the extent to which the activity is self-adjustable. It is not a question of the absolute presence or absence of adjustment. The steam engine, for example, is to a degree self-adjustable, inasmuch as the slide-valve adjusts its movements to the position of the piston plate; and it becomes self-adjustable to a wider extent

when it is fitted with a governor. But no machine that we are able to construct, or even to imagine, approaches, in the range of its adjustability, that of the most unintelligent animal. Every machine has to be 'fed'—the steam engine with fuel, the printing-press with paper and ink—and when the 'food' is no longer supplied by an external agency, the machine ceases to work. The animal, on the other hand, and especially the human being, finds food for himself; and where the food substance is not already prepared, man, at any rate, is able to prepare it, adapting to this purpose a great variety of apparently innutritious substances.

Now if we conceive the range of activity of any machine to be sufficiently extended to equal that of a human being, we shall necessarily think of that machine as conscious. In other words, if we make our mechanical conception sufficiently comprehensive to cover the complexity of human nature, it will be no longer purely mechanical. That there should be a machine with this range of activity is quite conceivable. It is clear that the conception involves no contradiction. We already construct machines with a certain degree of adjustability, and the degree of adjustability is being constantly extended. There is no contradiction in supposing that it may be indefinitely extended, though of course, beyond a certain point, we cease to have any clear picture of what such a machine would be. Let us suppose, then, that we had a steam engine which could not only adjust its slide-valve to the position of the piston plate, and not only adjust the throttle to the variations in speed, but could mine its own coal, or could deal with the commercial conditions under which coal were to be obtained, giving a fitting expression to its wants and a fitting response to the existing state of the market. Though technically unimaginable, none of this is mechanically absurd. Yet it is clear that we should be obliged to regard such a machine as endowed with life and consciousness. The range of its capacity for self-adjustment would of itself constitute consciousness.

In this interpretation we at once encounter the objection that complexity of structure and range of adjustability have nothing whatever to do with the presence or absence of consciousness. Mechanism and consciousness, it will be said, are absolute differences of kind. Either may be thought of in all degrees of simplicity and complexity. But let your machine be never so complex, it is still nothing but a machine, and consciousness never so simple is still consciousness. Man may himself be conceived as an automaton. There is no absurdity in supposing that his action is the result of purely mechanical forces and of a purely mechanical structure, provided only the structure be conceived as sufficiently complex. Here, it is argued, we have a conception of a highly complex mechanism, yet so far are we from associating complexity with consciousness that in the term 'automaton' the latter is distinctly implied to be absent.

This, it seems to me, is the crucial point of the argument. Can we really conceive of man as an unconscious automaton? Now of course we not only can, but apparently we are compelled to dissociate consciousness and mechanism, if by the latter we mean the common machines. For the most complex machines constructed are nothing but various combinations of a few simple elementary forms, such as wheels, levers, cranks, and the like ; and capacity for thought seems incompatible with a structure so simple. Evidently it is still this simple form of structure that we have in mind when we conceive the human being to be an unconscious automaton. I do not mean that we definitely imagine him to be a combination of wheels and levers, etc., but merely that we couple the common notion of machine with a vague notion of 'more complex,' without definitely formulating to ourselves just what structural differences a greater complexity would involve, and what effect these structural differences would have upon our interpretation of his activity. When we take these structural modifications into account we find, as it seems to me, not only that we can conceive a mechanical

object to think, but that it becomes inconceivable that a mechanical object of so high a degree of complexity should not think.

It is very important to remember that a machine of the human degree of complexity would no longer be a thing of simple wheels and levers. And, for that matter, it must be noted that when we add a degree of complexity to a machine of the ordinary sort we do not merely add an extra wheel or so. On the contrary, every new degree of adaptability requires usually an increased adaptability in all the parts; for each new requirement we have to reconstruct the whole machine, modifying each part and increasing its complexity, so as to make it respond to the new as well as to the old requirements. Consequently, as a machine becomes more complex as a whole, and more adaptable to varying conditions, it becomes also more complex and adaptable — in other words, more *sensitive* — in its individual parts. Suppose, then, that we have a machine with the range of adaptability found in the human being. It is clear that we have now far exceeded the possibilities of wheels and levers. The structure of such a machine, it is necessary to assume, would be as complex as that of the human being himself; and each part would be as complex as the individual nerve or muscle, — whose structure, it need not be said, we are still unable to conceive clearly. Now granting that it is difficult to attribute consciousness to a creature of wheels and levers, it is at the same time difficult to avoid attributing consciousness to a creature whose structure has reached the physiological stage of complexity and adaptability. For that matter we tend involuntarily to read consciousness into activities far less complex — into those which, according to our ordinary canons, are certainly unconscious. Though we refuse to associate consciousness with the simpler machines, yet when we watch a very intricate piece of machinery in operation and note how each part adapts itself nicely to the movements of every other part, it requires usually some effort to remember that it is

after all a *mere* machine,—a thing made with hands. Involuntarily we tend to think that it knows what it is doing. And when we have to do with an activity so vastly complex and adaptable as that of a higher animal or human being, the association of consciousness with the activity is no longer merely involuntary but inevitable and necessary. In a word, an activity thus adaptable becomes *ipso facto* a conscious activity.

Taking our start now from the conception of a purposive activity, let us suppose that we wish to make the purpose clear. First we have to note that the features contained in the purpose are as numerous and complicated as the activities by which the purpose is attained. Suppose that I am going to New York to meet a friend arriving on an incoming steamer. The preparations include, say, a railway ticket, a stock of clean linen, and a provision for any family or business needs that may arise during my absence. As we usually conceive it, the end is contained in the simple desire to meet the friend, all of the other features of the activity being regarded as mere means. But this is clearly an insufficient statement. I should probably not undertake to meet my friend if I had to make the journey on foot, or if I were unable to make a decent appearance, or to provide for the needs of business during my absence. Consequently a complete statement of my purpose would have to include all the desires implied in the intermediary activities and all their reciprocal relations. The same is true of the life purpose as a whole. Among the features of our life there are no absolute means or absolute ends, but all are coördinate in the organic unity constituting the end. The life purpose must then be as complex and as comprehensive in its character as the sum of activities in which it is realised.

It is evident, then, that a clear statement of the purpose would be much more than an abstract statement of principle. The principle would have to be so stated as to bring simultaneously to mind all the features included in the purpose in all their reciprocal relations. This means, in other words, that we



must have a conception of human life of the same sort that the geometer has of the circle, in which all the various aspects of the circle, including the mutual relations of its centre, its diameters, its chords, arcs, inscribed and circumscribed polygons, etc., are conceived simultaneously as the logical consequences of the circular line, and the latter as the unity of these various relations; or, again, as the draughtsman conceives a proposed machine, calculating the size, shape, and position of each part with reference to its function in the working of the machine as a whole. In other words, one who undertook to make an ultimately clear and detailed statement of the human life purpose would have to make a map of it, conceiving of human nature in mechanical form, determining the exact place of each feature and the mutual relations of all the features according to a mathematical formula.

What sort of mechanism should we then expect to find in our diagram of the life purpose? Certainly not a combination of wheels and levers. It is evident rather that a clear statement of the human purpose would be a completely detailed account of the human anatomy. And this is where we finally arrive in the search for a clear definition of the life purpose. Every human activity is ultimately a bodily activity, involving a coördination of muscular movements. And every function in the life purpose has its counterpart in the structural details of the body and in their structural connections through the brain and nervous system. The human anatomy is thus the life purpose reduced to concrete expression. If we could formulate the anatomical relations in such a way as to obtain in one act of thought a picture of all their minute details, in all their reciprocal relations, we should have at once a clear statement of the organic unity of human nature and a comprehensive statement of its mechanical structure.

It appears, then, that there is no ultimate contradiction between the mechanical and teleological views of human life. A mechanism with the high degree of organisation shown in human life must necessarily be conceived as conscious. At the

same time, every conscious activity must have its correlative mechanical expression. As an activity which produces effects in the mechanical world it must be the activity of some sort of mechanical structure ; and the structure must necessarily be as complex as the end which it is sought to realise. It follows, then, that an ultimately clear conception of the ends of consciousness would show the same mathematical relations as those contained in the anatomical structure through which the ends are attained. In other words, a clear conception of the human life purpose would ultimately be a mechanical statement of the structure of the human body, while, on the other hand, an ultimately comprehensive picture of the human anatomy would exhibit all the details as working together in a unity of conscious purpose.

### *(b) Happiness and Self-realisation*

We come now to the more distinctly ethical aspect of the opposition of conceptions, as expressed in the antithesis between happiness and self-realisation. The essential feature of the opposition is as follows : When the hedonist asserts that our actions are directed toward happiness, he means that the determining factors are mainly on the side of the environment. He cannot entirely dispense with the internal factor, since the organism must have some quality if it is even to receive impressions. But in making it 'happiness,' or a desire for contentment and bodily comfort, he conceives the agent to be as nearly as possible passive and ready to conform to external conditions, as a result of which the factors determining the special direction of his activity will lie mostly in his environment. Self-realisation, on the other hand, places the determining factors mainly in the organism, the environment being a relatively passive instrument which is made to conform to the desires of the self.

Now the hedonistic view of the relation of self and environment will be true only of a creature with very simple desires. Let us imagine an animal with but one simple impulse ; let him be a horse, let his impulse be a food impulse, and let his food

be nothing but oats. It is evident that his activity will then be fatally determined by the presence or absence of this single object. In the presence of oats he will eat, in their absence he will do nothing. But now if 'food' include a variety of objects — and not a mere variety but a certain coördination of them, as is the case with our human food — the response to a particular stimulus is not so obvious and inevitable. The presence or absence of a given object does not of itself determine what the organism will do. It all depends upon the place which this object holds at the moment in the complex demand for food. Accordingly, the preponderance of determining factors is now transferred from the side of external conditions to the side of inner demands, and the activity has become, relatively speaking, a realisation of self. But the complexity of relations assumed here is a very inadequate representation of the complexity found in our human nature as a whole. For the already highly complex food impulse stands side by side with other impulses, each of which, complex in itself, adds a new degree of complexity to the organic activity as a whole and a new degree of specialisation to the conditions necessary for organic satisfaction. And though we grant, with some hedonists, that the only impulse beside the food impulse is that of sex, still it is clear that, in human beings as contrasted with the lower animals, 'sex' covers a wide range of conditions, and requires a very special combination of characters for its satisfaction. It is evident, then, that with a conception of happiness sufficiently comprehensive to cover the complexity of human desires, we could no longer represent human activity as to any considerable degree externally determined. The activity would no doubt be controlled with reference to the environment, but the determining factors would be mostly on the inner side, the nature of the response to any particular stimulus being determined by the point reached in the satisfaction of a complex impulse.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "For activity is self-determining just in so far as the agent's reaction against his environment ceases to be determined for him from the outset by a few rigidly

It appears then that a conception of 'happiness' sufficiently comprehensive to cover the complexities of human action would be identical with the conception of self-realisation.

Turning now to the idealistic standpoint, we find in the endeavour to clarify the conception of self-realisation an approach to the conception of 'happiness.' A clear definition of the self would require an exact statement (ultimately a mathematical statement) of the part played in the self by each of the several capacities whose harmonious development constitutes the self-realisation. In other words, we should have to express the self in terms of quantity and the individual capacities in terms of amount. But the search for a quantitative conception of human capacity or potentiality would bring us to a conception similar to the physicist's conception of energy; for 'energy' is nothing more than the possibility of action. The self as a whole would then be the expression of organic energy, *i.e.* of the particular possibilities of activity contained in human nature. Self-realisation would be the complete satisfaction of organic aims or, in other words, the realisation of the demands of organic welfare. But in 'organic welfare' we have arrived at what the hedonist means by 'happiness.' A clear definition of self-realisation would thus be a quantitative statement in terms of happiness. This, however, is not equivalent to a statement that all our desires are mere modifications of the special demands of food and sex. It means rather that all our concrete desires, including these

fixed typical forms of instinctive response to certain general classes of stimulus, and comes to be adapted on each and every occasion to secure the particular result, which, under the special circumstances of the case, is demanded by the permanent interests of the individual or of the species of which he is a representative member. I am, for instance, more truly a self-determining agent than a hemisphereless fish, because while the fish is so constituted that he cannot but snap at the bait that is dangled before his nose, even though he has but this moment been released from the hook that lies concealed behind it, I can put down the glass that I am raising to my lips and consider the probable effect of the indulgence upon my health, my work, and my reputation." — A. E. TAYLOR, *The Problem of Conduct*, p. 40.

of food and sex, form a single system of quantitative relations, that all may therefore be conceived as quantitative variations of the one organic impulse or energy.

(c) *Social Equilibrium and Social Organism*

Our third and last illustration has to do with the opposing social conceptions. Here we have an opposition between the hedonistic conception of a social equilibrium and the idealistic conception of a social organism, or social personality. The hedonistic theory sets out from the conception of a society made up of separate individuals with separate and conflicting interests. Social organisation is then a compromise in which each agrees to renounce an amount of his own happiness sufficient to enable him to live with others, to command their services, and to prevent their interference with his private aims ; in Mr. Spencer's language, it is an 'equilibrium' of social forces. But, as Mr. Spencer adds, it is not a static equilibrium, such as exists between the several stones in an arch, where each is held in a fixed position by the others, but a moving equilibrium, such as exists between the several parts of a machine in motion, or between the several members of the solar system. Idealism, on the other hand, conceives of society as an organic unity, — not an equilibrium of opposing forces, but a harmonious co-ordination of functions, none of which has any existence or any interests apart from those of the organism as a whole.

Starting from the hedonistic standpoint we have to note that here as before it is only while we are dealing with relatively simple structures that the hedonistic conception remains purely mechanical. If the human being were a simple and rigid fact with a very restricted choice of action — like the fly-wheel of a steam engine, which can do nothing but turn on its shaft — we should have to think of society as an equilibrium, in which the movement of each part were rigidly determined by the movements of the other parts, — in which, in other

words, each individual interest were held in check by the resistance offered by others. But as a matter of fact the human being is highly complex in structure, and may react upon a simple obstruction in an indefinite number of ways. Accordingly, when two human beings come together, it is not a case of blind collision, like the crash of railway trains, where each pursues its original course until its energy is exhausted by the resistance offered by the other ; nor is it a case of mutual restraint, like that of the parts of a machine or of the solar system, where the path of each is determined by the attractions and repulsions offered by the others. On the contrary, each of the approaching bodies is able, to some extent at least, so to adapt his movements to those of the other that he may pursue his own way without interference. But the result of this complex organisation is not merely an absence of interference but rather a positive extension of activity. For the possibility of mutual adaptation is also a possibility of coöperation. In other words, each may not only avoid collision with the other but may also aid him in the prosecution of his activity ; and the result is that, through united effort, both secure larger results than if working alone. To this we must add that the gain from united effort is out of all proportion to the number engaged. Each new member added to the organisation means that the organisation as such is capable of dealing with a far larger variety of conditions, thus increasing its product out of all proportion to the numerical increase in membership. And when we think of the race as a whole in a state of perfect organisation, there appears to be no limit to the attainable results, and at the same time no limit to the amount by which we may further the interests of each member.

What becomes of the social equilibrium under these conditions ? Evidently the conception of a mere equilibrium is no longer applicable. For the essential feature of an equilibrium is an original opposition of interests, each of which is simply checked by a blind collision with the others. But in a



condition of perfect organisation among highly complex individuals there is no longer any opposition of interests. On the contrary each finds his own highest interest in the interest of society as a whole, and no individual self-interest is checked by the self-interest of any other. The conditions of an equilibrium are thus no longer present. And we may add that in the absence of these conditions the activity is no longer 'blind.' Only a simple collision of forces could be called blind ; a state of complex mutual adaptation would necessarily be conceived as conscious and purposive. It seems, then, that when we make the conception of a social equilibrium sufficiently comprehensive to cover the social activities of human beings, we have no longer a social equilibrium, but a social personality.

From the idealistic standpoint the argument is as before : a clear statement of the content of the social personality would be a mathematical statement in terms of social units. Only one point requires special mention. It is evident that, if we are to secure a clear statement of the nature of the social unity, we must have ultimately a detailed statement of the part played by each individual and of the exact reciprocal relations of the individual functions. And in a unity of action each function would have to be exactly adjusted to the others. This condition of adjustment is implied in the conception of harmonious, purposive action, for if such adjustments were not made, men would be working at cross purposes. It follows, then, that each function would be in some sense determined — or at any rate defined — by the other, and consequently that a clear statement of the social unity would be a statement in which the several functions were conceived as in some sense in a relation of equilibrium.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. THE IMMEDIATE CONTRADICTIONS OF CONCRETE THOUGHT

In the foregoing I have endeavoured to show that the conceptions upon which the alternative theories of conduct rest have

<sup>1</sup> Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*, pp. 5 ff., 89 ff.

a certain complementary character, — that they are so related that a complete statement of conduct in terms of one conception would necessarily include the statement aimed at by its alternative. We have to remember, however, that this applies only to the bare conceptions ; and the conceptions, as such, do not constitute knowledge or truth, in the complete sense. There is no real knowledge until the conceptions have been developed into a scientific system, — that is, until they have been actually worked out and reduced to terms of fact and detail. And it is possible that, when thus developed, they would present a very different aspect. Hence, the indications to the effect that these conceptions would be ultimately complementary and mutually consistent are not sufficient to warrant the assertion of consistency as a scientific fact. There is no real coördination of theory, and no real solution of the problem, until the whole object has been completely analysed and all its individual aspects completely articulated.

Now when we endeavour to construct such a system by applying these metaphysical conceptions to the world immediately before us, we encounter a contradiction between the mechanical interpretation of things on the one side and the teleological interpretation on the other ; and while believing in the ultimate unity of both aspects of the world, we find it necessary, for immediate and practical purposes, to hold them to some degree apart. We find it necessary to calculate, yet we have no adequate basis for all the purposes of calculation. We therefore make use of the units offered by science, though recognising their merely provisional character. For more general purposes we adopt the physical atoms as our elements of reality, and the law of gravitation as a statement of their relations, though we know that upon this basis of calculation we can hardly include all the aspects of the world. In our view of human desire we find it conducive to clearness to suppose that all desires are modifications of the desire for sensuous pleasure, though we know that, upon the basis of our present conception of

sensuous pleasure, the view cannot ultimately be true. And we find it similarly convenient to think of society as an aggregate of independent units or selves, while recognising that the real self must be more comprehensive and less independent than the self we have postulated.

Our inability to effect a complete reconciliation of ethical theories is but one phase of the general limitations of our thought. It is a fact of the same order as that of the 'span of attention.' We find that only a small number of objects can be taken in at a glance. If we can conceive them to be related in some sort of order—in groups or in geometrical figures—we can take in a larger number; but our attention is now occupied with the groups as such rather than with the individuals composing them. The same is true of our thought generally. It is clearly difficult to get a view of a complex object which shall in an instant of thought include all the details of the object and all their mutual relations. Suppose that one is observing the operation of a simple model of a steam engine. It will perhaps be possible for one with some knowledge of mechanics to apprehend at a glance both the sum of its constituent parts in all of their structural relations and the exact manner in which they work together in the general economy of the machine. But if we add a few modifications to our machine, our grasp of its plan of operation becomes relatively vague; and we need not go far before we find it quite impossible to grasp all the details in a single organised act of thought. We may then form a general conception of the end or purpose which determines the construction as a whole, and we may think of the parts one by one as related to that conception. But we can hardly get such a view that in the act of conceiving of the purpose of the construction we have at the same time a clear and detailed view of the structure as the expression of that purpose. But the complexity of any kind of machine is of small extent when compared with the complexity of human nature. It is therefore still less to be expected that

we should obtain a really organic view of the economy of human life. Our view of life as a whole must necessarily be somewhat vague, while any clear view will necessarily be somewhat narrow.

A clear and fully comprehensive conception of human nature would require evidently a mind of more than the present highest human capacity. We are accustomed to estimate mental capacity by the capacity for generalisation, while admitting that with the increase of power of generalisation there is a loss of the power of retaining details. But this choice of criterion is an accommodation to human limitations ; it is valid only (if it have any real validity) for a creature with a narrow 'span of attention.' Where we conceive these limitations to be absent, we adopt a different measure. If, for example, we endeavour, with Kant and the theologians, to conceive of the infinite mind of God, we cannot reconcile the infinite capacity for thought with even the smallest loss of detail. We cannot conceive of God's conception of the world as an abstract conception of world principle ; it must also be in a sense a bird's-eye view, a view which takes in at a glance each minute detail, each difference of relation, and at the same time comprehends all in an organic unity. In other words, it must be a view in which the mechanical and teleological conceptions have arrived at a concrete harmony. Now it is *a priori* conceivable that this degree of capacity may be reached in the future development of human thought. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is not more than conceivable ; for, however far the grasp of the mind be extended, there is no ground for believing that it will ever equal the task set before it.

#### 4. HEDONISM AND IDEALISM AS REGULATIVE HYPOTHESES

In the meantime we have to ask what attitude we are to take toward the empirical divergence of theory. Ought we to be content with a view of conduct which is practical and clear, ignoring all those aspects which tend to introduce confusion,

or ought we to make the attempt to grasp the meaning of life as a whole without regard to the extent to which we may grasp it clearly? Or, again, translating the theoretical into a practical question, ought we to aim immediately at a complete and ideal form of human existence, or is it better to confine our activity to regions where the conditions assure us of practical results? Evidently the true view of life and of conduct is not to be found in the exclusive acceptance of either alternative, but in a form of activity regulated by a consideration of both. In other words, both alternatives must be used as regulative hypotheses. In the absence of an exact coördination, we may still effect an adjustment, or compromise, by which we may obtain guidance from both. This use of alternatives is, in fact, the method commonly used in the solution of practical problems. The mariner whose course is not accurately marked out knows that he is to avoid Scylla on the one side and Charybdis on the other. The instruction to avoid either alone would not give him the safe and proper course, yet the instruction to avoid both tells him his course with a fair degree of accuracy. It is in some such way that we are to make use of the theories of hedonism and idealism,—but with this important difference, that whereas the mariner's problem is to keep as far as possible from both of the opposing alternatives, the moral problem is to bring the two as near as possible together. For it is not a question merely of avoiding extreme ideals or an extreme compliance with conditions, but rather of combining the highest possible ideals with the most thorough adjustment to conditions. In chapters xviii and xix I shall endeavour to state in a general way how this attitude would be expressed in concrete activity. In the meantime we shall endeavour to gain a clearer view of the problem by studying its significance from the standpoint of evolution.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SITUATION FROM AN EVOLUTIONARY STANDPOINT

#### 1. THE STANDPOINT FOR A CONCEPTION OF EVOLUTION

IN undertaking a statement of the evolutionary process something should first be said about the standpoint from which we are to proceed. In previous chapters we have considered two theories of evolution, one of which proceeds from the standpoint of external observation and interprets the evolutionary process in the light of the external activity alone, while the other takes the internal standpoint of self-consciousness and interprets the process as a development of purpose and motive. From the one we get a purely mechanical conception of evolution, from the other a purely teleological conception. It is evident, however, that either point of view involves an abstraction, however necessary the abstraction may be for immediate and practical purposes. We do not get a true idea of human activity merely by observing the overt actions of others and ignoring their possible connection with motives and purposes, nor yet by a mere analysis of our own motives, which leaves out of account the manner in which these motives are expressed in overt action. Clearly a conception of human activity which looks exclusively at one side or the other is an inadequate representation of the concrete reality as it is apprehended in our common sense. Accordingly, if we are to frame a conception of evolution which shall enable us to include within a concrete reality the opposing elements of the moral situation, we must avoid committing ourselves to either abstraction. We



must regard the human being as a concrete whole — as a being which is both a mechanism and a personality — and our conception of evolution must be capable of expression in terms of either.

## 2. THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Such a conception is found, I believe, when we think of human evolution as *a process of extending our control over the resources of human life*. We get a familiar illustration of the process of extending our control in the progress of a country like our own, which is relatively new, yet not uncivilised, some parts of which show a high degree of culture, while others are quite wild and unknown. The development of the country means that we are constantly extending our control over its natural resources. We are bringing waste land under cultivation and developing its minerals and timber, for which purpose we are exploring and surveying. At the same time we are endeavouring, through more accurate knowledge and more economical methods, to derive a greater advantage from the resources already relatively controlled. At any stage of the process we may distinguish two sorts or phases of activity, — an activity which is relatively organised, systematic, and determinate, and an activity which is relatively unorganised, unsystematic, and free. The former is represented by the settled manner of life of the older civilisation, the latter by the relatively speculative activity of the more progressive element. But the two forms of activity stand in close reciprocal relations. Every new discovery, like that of oil or natural gas, works a change in the older civilisation, reorganising its industries and modifying the daily round of habits. On the other hand, every newer development is also a product of the older organisation, since without the railways to carry the oil and the pipes to conduct the gas, and, moreover, without the high degree of intellectual and industrial development necessary to their construction, the utilisation of the newer products would be impossible, — and for that matter, without a certain devel-

opment of scientific knowledge and of means of transportation, they would not have been discovered. Now it is in some such way that we are to conceive the evolution of human life and activity. The human being is constantly extending his control over the resources of human life. At any stage of the process his activity is to an extent organised and determined, to an extent unorganised and free. But the extent to which he may act effectively along new lines of effort depends upon the extent to which the older habits are organised into a system, while, on the other hand, every new line of activity requires a certain reorganisation of his system of organised habits. Evolution is thus a constant process of reorganisation looking to a wider range of activity.

Regarding the evolutionary process in this manner, we need not ask whether the 'resources of human life' lie in the latent capacities of human nature or in the environmental conditions. The process of extending our control may be stated in either terms. At any stage of the process the activity is subject to limiting conditions. And it makes no difference for our immediate purpose whether we say that the limits are imposed by the environment or by the incompleteness of our own development, for the one necessarily involves the other. For example, at a period previous to the development of steam power, we could have said, as we may still say, that facility of communication was limited by the conditions of space and time, and by the mechanical conditions determining the construction of means of transportation. But the existence of these conditions meant also that the human capacity for mathematical and mechanical construction was not yet sufficiently developed to deal with the opportunities offered by the presence of iron ore, coal, and water. The extent to which the limitations imposed by these conditions have been removed is that to which our human capacities have been developed; and the extent to which these limits remain may be regarded as nothing but the degree to which our latent capacities are not yet developed.

*(a) The Evolution of Knowledge*

Psychologically, the evolutionary process may be stated in two ways, — as an evolution of intellect, or knowledge, and as an evolution of will and desire. As an evolution of intellect it means that relatively vague appreciations of reality are being analysed and organised into relatively clear and systematic perceptions of objects. The first apprehension of an object is a relatively vague appreciation. It has all the indefiniteness of an impressionistic painting. When I see an object — say a typewriter — for the first time, I get an impression of it as a whole and also certain impressions of individual parts. But both are very indefinite. It is not until I have had a long acquaintance with the object that I have a perfectly definite picture. This picture is at the same time a definite picture of the object as a whole and a definite picture of each of its parts and of all its relations of parts. It is thus, as compared with the first impression, a systematic and organised view of the object. Such a growth in organisation is involved in all development of knowledge. The highest degree of organisation is found in our scientific knowledge ; it is found in a higher degree in the natural sciences as distinct from others, and in the highest degree in the most scientific of the natural sciences, the science of physics. Now between the organised thought of science and the relatively free activity of our unscientific thought, we may trace the same relations as those attributed to the organised and unorganised aspects of thought in general. The exact sciences cover a relatively narrow range of our thought, but they none the less furnish the basis upon which we attempt to organise our thinking in general. The physiologist or zoölogist hopes to bring his science to the stage of organisation reached by physics, and in his effort toward this end he is constantly endeavouring to conceive his subject-matter in terms that are purely mechanical. But all of our thought is making the same endeavour. The philosophy,

psychology, sociology, and even the theology of any period all represent, together with our popular thinking, an effort to define reality in terms of the prevalent scientific conceptions, and thus to conceive all reality in the form of a single compact system. On the other hand, the scientific conceptions are themselves being constantly reorganised to meet our newer appreciations of reality. While physiology is endeavouring to define its subject-matter in terms of physics, the physicist is at the same time endeavouring to reconstruct his conceptions so as to admit of a more comprehensive application. This is clearly the case at the present time, when the conception of matter as the ultimate basis of reality is giving way to the conception of force, and that of force is taking on a decidedly immaterial aspect. Looking, then, at the evolution of thought as a whole, we may say of it what we said of the evolution of human activity in general, that it is a constant process of re-organisation for the purpose of a wider range of activity.

*(b) The Evolution of Will*

In the development of will and desire, ideal aspirations are being organised into practical and imperative needs. Here we have a further illustration of the relation between organised and unorganised activities. The various wants of our nature differ in the extent to which they are necessities of life. And they are necessities to the extent that they are closely interwoven into the web of settled habits which constitutes our ordinary round of activity. They are necessities to the extent that they form a part of our organised activity, to the extent that a failure to attain satisfaction would tend to interfere with the process of activity as a whole. It is this that makes food a necessity. For some persons it is necessary that food should be of fine quality and delicately served. But the quality and manner of service is never so distinctly a necessity as the presence of food of some kind that can be eaten and digested. For though my day's work may suffer if my break-

fast has been unappetising, it may be impossible to do anything if I have had no breakfast at all. Thus, as compared with the need of breakfast as such, the demand for fine quality and delicate service is relatively an ideal demand,—a demand for something that is complete and perfect rather than imperative and necessary. And so we may think of all ideal demands, including not only those which relate more especially to the improvement of physical conditions but the demands for intellectual and æsthetic satisfaction; they are all demands for the improvement and perfection of life rather than for its mere preservation. As such they represent activities that are relatively unorganised and free. They are not so closely interwoven into the web of life as the more necessary wants, and their failure to attain satisfaction does not so seriously disorganise our life as a whole.

Now in the course of evolution we are constantly extending and reorganising our system of wants so as to obtain a wider range and a more perfect degree of satisfaction. In other words, we are constantly incorporating relatively ideal wants into the system of organic needs. Illustrations of this process are to be found in the increased comfort and healthfulness of our houses and cities as compared with those of our forefathers, in our better clothes and more frequent changes, in the opportunities for more extended reading and travel, and hence for more extended social intercourse. The last century has introduced a vast number of improvements into our way of living. As each improvement has become more of a possibility, it has become also more of a necessity, with the result that we now number among the necessities of health conditions which our forefathers would have regarded as wholly ideal,—conditions which were regarded as desirable, indeed, but incidental to an ideal existence rather than necessary for practical life. Accordingly, the evolution of desire and will follows the same method as the evolution of human life generally; it is a constant process of reorganisation for the purpose of covering a wider range of activity.

The two psychological aspects of development are clearly parallel and coördinate. We cannot say of either that it is primary while the other is secondary. The improvement of our practical life depends of course upon the extension of our knowledge, but on the other hand, the extension of our knowledge depends upon the demand for improvement, since it is this demand which stimulates our intellectual activities and determines their direction. Therefore, instead of a relation of cause and effect between the two psychological processes we have them related as coördinate features of a unitary activity. These features remain coördinate throughout the process. The extent to which our knowledge is clear and systematic marks always the extent to which its objects are necessary conditions of existence, and conversely. This relation is shown again by the science of physics, which represents our clearest and most systematic knowledge and which at the same time deals with the conditions—the simple mechanical conditions—which are most fundamental to all forms of activity. The evolution of mind is thus equally, inseparably, and almost indistinguishably, an organisation of appreciations into perceptions, and of the ideal into the practical. Both may be expressed by saying that it is an organisation of the ideal into the practical-real.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. HEDONISM AND IDEALISM AS EVOLUTIONARY ATTITUDES

In the distinction between organised and free activity we have an evolutionary statement of the distinction between hedonism and idealism. It has been pointed out that of the two ethical theories hedonism is the more scientific. Hedonism is the expression of the same standpoint and method which characterises the natural sciences in general, and mechanical science in particular; and as such it represents the demand

<sup>1</sup> In a paper on "Art, Industry and Science," *Psychological Review*, March, 1901, I have represented the evolution both of will and intellect as an organisation of the *æsthetic* into the practical and real,—of art into industry and science.



for an analytic and organised expression of reality in terms of constituent elements and their mutual relations. It is also, as we have seen, the view which represents more adequately the immediate demands of practical life. On the other hand, idealism as compared with hedonism is a poetic rather than a scientific theory. It represents a general feeling (intuition, or appreciation) of reality rather than an organised and analytic perception. And in its application to conduct it emphasises the ultimate need of a perfect and complete existence rather than the immediate need of dealing with present conditions. It becomes as such the expression of that side of our activity which is relatively undefined and unorganised.

Looking at the contrast of theory from this standpoint it appears to be no longer a contrast between fixed and stationary conceptions of reality, but rather a contrast of attitude toward the existing crisis in a constantly advancing process,—in other words, a contrast of attitude toward the existing phase of the moral problem. In the course of evolution the centre or focus of the process of reorganisation is constantly moving. Elements of reality which were at one time new and apparently in conflict with the fundamental realities have now been incorporated into the scientific system, and ideals which at one time appeared to be revolutionary have now come to be presupposed in our daily round of activity. But having answered one question and satisfied one need, there is always another awaiting our attention. And so the problem of life and science is constantly changing, and with the change of problem there comes a change in the form of theory which stands for one side or the other. This movement of the point at issue, with the corresponding modification of the opposing views constituting the issue, may be easily observed in all our thought and activity. For example, the issue between our Republican and Democratic parties is very different to-day from what it was forty years ago. One who thinks only of the constant change of party issues may even doubt whether the continuity of political standpoint

is anything more than a tradition ; yet one who carefully studies the opposing views may easily see that each represents to-day the same political attitude that it represented in the past, and is the expression of the same general attitude toward life. Again, the conceptions of physical science are very different to-day from what they were in the time of Newton, and as we have seen, they are still undergoing a process of modification ; yet physical science maintains to-day the same attitude toward thought and life in general that it has always held. Now the same is true of our theories of conduct. The contrast of hedonism and idealism is to be found everywhere in the history of philosophy, yet the hedonism of Bentham is not that of Epicurus, nor is Spencer's hedonism the same as that of Bentham. Even the last half century has shown a decided change in the point at issue. Fifty years ago it had mainly to do with the question of whether conduct was to be made the subject of calculation and reasoning, — in other words, whether it was to be determined with reference to an end. This question may now in a sense be regarded as settled, and the moral issue of to-day relates rather to the nature of the end toward which our conduct is to be directed. Yet it is easy to see that the utilitarian doctrine to the effect that the end justifies the means is the expression of the same attitude which also defines the end as happiness, and, on the other hand, that the view which defines the end as self-realisation is an expression of the same attitude which formerly refused to recognise any ends whatever. This, then, is what our ethical theories come finally to stand for : in the light of their history and evolution they no longer represent an opposition of fixed views, but rather a contrast of attitude toward a constantly developing problem. Hedonism is the representative of organised conditions and scientific conceptions of reality ; idealism is the representative of the wants and intuitions which have not yet been clearly defined and organised.

## 4. THE PERMANENCE OF THE PROBLEMATIC SITUATION

In a world whose development is determined by one universal law, such as we are bound to assume our world to be, there ought to be no conflict or inconsistency between progressive ideals and organised conditions. This means that there should be on the one hand no inconsistency between the scientific view of the world as a mechanism and the teleological view of the world as the development of a purpose, and none, on the other hand, between the demands of self-preservation and those of self-realisation. Looking at conduct as a mechanical relation of cause and effect, or as the outcome of existing conditions, we should expect, after making a summary of the causes or conditions and working out their effects, to reach a result identical with what is given in intuition as the purpose or ideal of conduct ; and on the other hand an analysis of our ideal should show it to be necessarily implied in the sum of conditions or causes. In other words, we ought to be able to effect a harmonious conjunction between causes read forward and ideals read backward. The ideal should be found in an estimate of the mechanical effects of present conditions, the present conditions in an analysis of the logical presuppositions of the ideals.

Now it is interesting to note that in studying some past phase in the development of thought and activity this sort of consistency seems almost attainable. Thus, reviewing the American Revolution from our present standpoint, it seems possible to conceive it both as the realisation of certain ideals of liberty and equality and, at the same time, as the necessary outcome of geographical and economic conditions, — the necessary result of an attempt to organise the life of the colonies. The view from the distance fails apparently to destroy either aspect of the activity; we seem only to see more clearly how the ideals grew out of the conditions. This is even clearer when we turn our attention to the history of thought. Looking at some past system of science or philosophy from our present standpoint,

it becomes clear that it had to be modified because it proved to be too narrow to cover the facts brought out in subsequent investigations ; but at the same time we can see that the development was due to the efforts of those standing for the system to make it internally more consistent. Historically, it seems possible to conceive of each successive phase in the process of reorganisation as the logical completion of the organisation already effected, and of the evolutionary process as a single consistent stream of activity without internal conflicts and contradictions.

But in the midst of the activity itself this consistent view of things is rarely attainable. It is not, indeed, unreasonable to suppose that even here such ultimate consistency might be discovered in a really complete view of the situation, — that is, in a view sufficiently comprehensive to take in the whole situation and sufficiently clear to represent each of its details in distinct outline. But it is obvious that at the moment of action such completeness of view is never realised. And for human beings as we know them its realisation is quite out of the question. Hence it happens that at every stage of our growth, at every stage both of individual and of social development, we find ourselves in the presence of a contradiction between ideals to be realised and conditions which must be observed. It is this contradiction which I have endeavoured to state and define in all the preceding chapters, as a contradiction which appears not only in theory of conduct but in all departments of science and philosophy. Its presence in the life process tends to divide our world into two, — into an objective material world, apprehended in science, which sets the conditions and immediate limits for the realisation of desire, and an internal subjective world of purpose, which is apprehended intuitively and represents the ideals we aim to realise. In order to move further in the life process it is necessary that the two be fitted together ; yet we are never able to join them in a perfectly satisfactory manner. This does not mean that we face a

blank contradiction, for some extent of practical coördination is always effected ; and if this were impossible, the life process would come to a stop. What is meant is that such coördination is necessarily of the nature of a compromise. What we strictly ought to do is never the most spontaneous tendency of our nature. Our happiness points in one direction, our ideals in another. And in the end, when a practical coördination is reached, both have been to some extent sacrificed ; we have abandoned some feature of our ideal to meet the existing conditions and ignored some of the conditions of happiness in the interest of our ideal.

There is no reason to believe that this contradiction will be permanently less of a contradiction than it is in the present, or that it is less of a contradiction in the present than it has been in the past. This point has been anticipated in chapters vii and viii, where it is shown that there is no ground for believing that the sum of happiness has been increased in the present as compared with the past, or that it will show any increase in the future. It is true that life is being constantly improved, that conditions are being constantly reorganised to admit of a wider range of activity, and that scientific conceptions are being constantly reorganised to cover a wider range of reality. That the history of life and of thought is a record of relatively constant progress is a proposition which few would deny. But when a certain ideal is reached, and a certain range of reality organised and brought under control, there appears always a wider range of reality and of ideal need whose existence was hitherto not thought of. And thus, when the attention is set free by the solution of one problem, it is immediately set to work upon the solution of another, which now becomes as vital and as pressing as any problem which has appeared in the past. At every stage of the process we tend to believe that the problem upon which we are immediately engaged is the final one, that its solution will be a final answer to all difficult questions. We rest constantly under the illusion that the next step in the fulfilment

of our individual ambitions will bring us a secure and lasting contentment, that the next step in social reform will finally establish the social structure upon a stable basis. Yet each problem is succeeded by another equally difficult, and in its own time equally important, and we can find no ground for believing that the stream of problems will ever be exhausted.

The constant development of new problems is due to the indefinite extent of human demands and resources. No ultimate limit can be assigned to either. At any given point in the evolutionary process the resources may not equal the demands and the demands themselves may thus be held in check. But this situation exists only temporarily and relatively. Sooner or later we succeed in effecting some compromise between demands and conditions, and then, the immediate demand being satisfied, we turn to the next. There appears to be no ground for supposing that this process may not continue forever. We have therefore to assume that, whatever stage is reached, there will still be a higher. We shall then be in the same position toward the then higher as we are now toward the immediately higher. There will be a conflict between the demands of the higher stage and the conditions developed in the next lower. We may then expect a constant renewal of the conflict, and a constant renewal of the moral problem.

Without its problem it is not easy to imagine what life would be. For problem and difficulty appear to lie at the basis of all its positive character. Let us suppose life to be absolutely self-consistent and frictionless. There would be no tragedy, for tragedy has to do with conflict; no comedy, for comedy rests upon incongruities; no art, for art is the solution of a problem; no pleasure, for pleasure is the overcoming of a difficulty. In a word, there would be no interest, since interest presupposes a degree of uncertainty; and finally (if we hold that consciousness itself rests upon a conflict), there would be no consciousness. A being which had solved all its problems and had reached a final and complete condition of adjustment to



environment, would seem to be simply an automaton. Possibly such absolute automatism may be the final object of our desire, as Oriental philosophy has conceived it to be. And it may be possible to conceive, as the accompaniment of automatism, an eternally satisfied consciousness. This is a question which I shall not attempt to consider. I wish only to point out that problem and difficulty appear to be inseparably connected with life as we now have it; that, however difficult it may be to discover any intrinsic goodness in a conscious life which is conscious only in the presence of conflict and struggle, yet if we eliminate the element of conflict, it becomes equally difficult to see how human life could remain humanly interesting.

In thus insisting upon the positive character of the moral conflict the view presented here differs both from (1) the optimistic view which regards the moral conflict as a mere appearance, and from (2) the pessimistic view which regards it as a hopeless contradiction. (1) The first I understand to be the view implied in Professor Dewey's definition of the 'ethical postulate': "Defining conduct from the standpoint of the action, which includes both the agent and his scene of action, we see that *the conduct required truly to express an agent is, at the same time, the conduct required to maintain the situation in which he is placed; while, conversely, the conduct that truly meets the situation is that which furthers the agent.*"<sup>1</sup> Now it would be too much to say that the 'ethical postulate' is wholly meaningless. It is probable, as we have just seen, that for an agent capable of arriving at a really complete view of his situation — *i.e.* a view sufficiently comprehensive to take in the whole situation and sufficiently clear to represent each of its details in distinct outline — the postulate would be absolutely valid. We should then be justified in saying that when the conflict occurs, it is a mere appearance due to an incomplete view. But no human being is capable of arriving at a really complete view. Consequently, there is no one for whom it is

<sup>1</sup> See his *Syllabus*, p. 11, also his paper in *The Monist*, Vol. VIII, p. 321.

possible to effect a complete reconciliation between the conduct required to express himself as an agent and that which meets his situation. And in the absence of a concrete possibility of reconciliation it seems not only irrelevant but morally unwholesome to insist upon such possibility as a practical postulate. An agent compelled to assume that ideals and conditions are fully reconcilable finds himself in the following situation: he does not succeed in effecting a reconciliation; he is somewhat uncertain about the conduct required to express himself as an agent; but the demands of the conditions seem relatively clear. It will therefore be sufficient for him to meet the conditions — to choose the path of contentment and happiness, or the path of least resistance (since the need of resistance is unreal) — leaving the ideals to take care of themselves. In a word, he will judge moral effort to be unnecessary. It is evident that the result will be anything but moral conduct. He will neither realise his moral ideal nor will he 'truly' meet the situation in the sense that Mr. Dewey intends it. On the other hand, if he clearly recognised beforehand that ideals and conditions were not altogether reconcilable, he would feel it necessary to give each side a certain measure of consideration, and he might then go far toward realising the demands of both.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Hence, though recognising the positive character of the conflict, we need not, on the other hand, assume that the situation is hopelessly self-contradictory. For granting that our solutions of moral problems are never completely satisfactory, they may still be satisfactory to a greater or less degree. One's

<sup>1</sup> As a *mere* postulate, *i.e.* as the statement of a requirement of a finally satisfactory and reasonable view of conduct, the ethical postulate appears to me to be indisputable. But to set it up as a basis of action for us here and now (which I take to be the intention of the *Syllabus*) is to assume that the requirement is fulfilled, and thus to convert a mere postulate into a *fact*. It will be recalled that the postulate as such has been already assumed on p. 151 where I say that "ethics assumes . . . that ultimately there is a fundamental unity of nature and interests among the several individuals composing society. All ethical theories are attempts to justify this assumption."

life may be better or worse regulated ; it may be a relatively consistent and effective life or a mere random existence. And though new difficulties are constantly arising to disturb its equilibrium, yet in the meantime our activities have been organised upon a broader basis, and the life process has moved a step forward. If we admit that evolution takes place, that the later stages of individual and social life are any advance upon the earlier, then we shall have to admit that moral problems are in some sense solved, and that moral effort is reasonable and worth while, even though the results be not all that could conceivably be desired.

#### 5. THE EVOLUTIONARY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REGULATIVE HYPOTHESIS

Through our analysis of the evolutionary situation we are able to see more clearly in what manner the alternative theories are to be used as regulative hypotheses. It now appears that the opposition of theory is not an opposition of permanently fixed conceptions, but an opposition of attitude toward a constantly developing problem, both sides of which are themselves in a constant process of modification and development. We have to do, then, not with absolute ideals and fixed conditions, but with constantly growing ideals and indefinitely adjustable conditions. The evolutionary process advances through a constant readjustment between the two factors in the situation,—through a reorganisation of conditions to meet the ideals and an enlargement of ideals to call for further reorganisation ; and, so far as the process includes ourselves, the centre or focus of the reorganising activity is to be found in us as agents. We have then, from a moral standpoint, to regard ourselves as responsible for the success or failure of the developmental process. If we acquiesce comfortably in the existing state of things, the process will be retarded ; on the other hand it will be retarded if we undertake to realise our ideals without reference to the existing conditions. The moral atti-

tude is therefore a constant endeavour to secure an effective adjustment between ideals and conditions. And since ideals and conditions are both in a constant process of development, the expression of the moral attitude will be constantly modified by the nature of the existing problem, — in other words, by the point reached in the reorganisation of human life. It is in this process of readjustment that we make use of the alternative theories as regulative hypotheses. In the next chapter we shall work out the general principle upon which such adjustment would rest.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE PRACTICAL MORAL ATTITUDE

#### 1. A REVIEW OF THE MORAL SITUATION

BEFORE undertaking a practical statement of our working hypothesis it will be convenient to take a brief review of the moral problem and of the results so far obtained. The moral problem, we have seen, is the expression of a conflict between our aspirations toward an ideally perfect and complete human life and the limiting conditions. From the subjective standpoint of the individual it represents a conflict between the desire to realise in self the ideal of a perfect rational and human being and the necessities imposed by one's physiological organisation. From the objective social standpoint it represents a conflict between the demand for an organic unity of rational beings and the tendencies toward individual advantage and disunion, which are again the outcome of our physiological organisation.

In this situation the hedonist proposes to ignore the ideal considerations and to conform strictly to the conditions. For in these conditions, he claims, we discover the real ground of things. The world of which we are a part is a world of mechanical forces. It is therefore bound to work itself out in its own way and in its own time. No effort of ours will either accelerate the process or retard it. Therefore let us study its workings, conform to its movements, and be content with the comfort and happiness which it offers us. The idealist, on the other hand, urges us to ignore the conditions and to devote our-

selves immediately to the pursuit of ideal ends. From his point of view, it is in the ideals, and not in the conditions, that we are to discover the real ground of things. The conditions by which we are hemmed in are after all mere negation. They represent nothing but the absence of self-consciousness,— or, in social terms, nothing but the absence of mutual sympathy and understanding. Therefore let us set out immediately and directly toward the attainment of the highest personal and social ideals. For if we be earnest in our demand for the ideal, the limiting conditions are bound to disappear.

Each of these alternatives, we have seen, has a certain measure of practical value, but neither is completely satisfactory. In reply to the hedonist we may claim that the mechanical conditions do not represent a fixed quantity or an impassable limit. The supposedly fixed conditions are themselves in a constant course of development. Those set up by the science of one generation are transcended by the science of the next. The mechanical world is being made constantly more serviceable for ideal ends; and the human organism is becoming constantly more capable of resisting disease, of enduring nervous strain, and of conforming to the human will generally; and in this development consciousness is not a mere passive spectator but an active agent. We may urge, then, in reply to hedonism, that within certain limits, ideal effort is clearly practicable and reasonable, for it is by such effort that the conditions are modified so as to be more conformable to ideal ends.

To the idealist, on the other hand, we may reply that the attainment of ideals is not a question merely of the earnestness and sincerity of our devotion. Admitting that all ideals are ultimately attainable, we have still to remember that they are only to be attained by proceeding in a certain definite manner from the standpoint of the present situation. Whatever we do we must always start from where we are, and we cannot take any course we like and still expect to arrive at the desired



end. In other words, we must recognise the fact that, even if the conditions place no absolute *limits* upon the ends to be attained, they still prescribe the *manner* in which attainment is brought about. We cannot rest upon the optimistic assumption that *somehow* the conditions will admit of the desired end. If we would attain any end whatever, we must first make a study of the situation in which we stand, and the manner of our activity must then be determined by the nature of the situation.

It might seem, then, that we had rejected the only possible alternatives. For in the one case we seem to deny that the conditions are limited, while in the other case we affirm it ; and between these two statements there appears upon first sight to be no possible middle ground. But in the last two chapters I have tried to show that, though we cannot bring the two ends of our problem quite together, still it remains *a priori* conceivable that they may be brought together. In chapter xvi it was pointed out that the conceptions of a world determined by mechanical forces and of a world determined by reason or consciousness, upon which the two sides of the problem rest, are not logically contradictory but only empirically irreconcilable. The difficulty of bringing them together, of finding our ideals implied in the conditions and the conditions implying the ideals, may be due only to the limitations of our human consciousness. Owing to these limitations we are obliged to conceive both of ideals and conditions in merely provisional terms and images ; and there is reason to believe that it is the provisional and imperfect nature of our terms and images which cause our ideals to point one way and the conditions another. It was then pointed out, in chapter xvii, that both ideals and conditions are after all merely transitional aspects of the evolutionary process. Neither represent fixed quantities. Both are defined with reference to the point at which we stand in the evolutionary process ; and their apparent contradiction represents the difficulty of passing from the point reached in the

organisation of our world to a point of further and more comprehensive organisation.

Now we may assume that the world progresses. The course of evolution may be uneven, and may pause longer before some difficulties than before others, but our growth is never permanently obstructed. Accordingly, we may believe that each of the difficulties encountered, each contradiction between ideals and conditions, is ultimately temporary and unreal. And we shall probably never meet with a difficulty that may not be to some degree overcome by intelligence and earnest effort. Nevertheless, we have no ground for believing that we shall ever be without difficulty, or permanently in less difficulty than now attends us. For the demands of our nature appear to be unlimited, and as long as life continues there will be a moral problem.

The practical significance of the moral situation may then be summarised as follows: Our human life is permanently problematic. We never reach a point either of complete realisation of ideals or of complete conformity to conditions. At every point of our existence we stand between two immediately contradictory demands, those of our ideals and those of our conditions. Theoretically, the two ought not to be ultimately incompatible, but practically they cannot be wholly reconciled; and our duty will not admit of an exclusive attention to either. It must lie, then, in the best possible mutual adjustment; and the best possible adjustment must be that which, since both demand satisfaction, affords the greatest satisfaction to each.

## 2. PROGRESS AND HAPPINESS

Before attempting to define the best possible adjustment it will be well, even at the risk of repetition, to take a further view of the moral situation, translating the conflicting factors into the more concrete conceptions of 'progress' and 'happiness.' The question is, what is the final significance of these conceptions, and how do we conceive them to be related in the light of our previous analysis?

Turning first to the conception of happiness it may be recalled that the emphasis laid upon sensuous satisfaction, in hedonistic theory and in the popular conception of happiness, is to be regarded in its last analysis as a merely approximate concrete expression of a more abstract and more clearly justifiable ethical motive. Hedonism, in its final significance, stands for the axiomatic proposition that our efforts must be firmly based upon the immediate and actual state of things,<sup>1</sup> that whatever we attempt to realise must be substantially realised. Now 'substantial realisation' at once suggests the conception of happiness or enjoyment, for it would seem that if we are to realise the substance of things and not their mere shadows, we must not only live in the expectation of a future good but at the same time appropriate the good contained in the present,—in other words, we must *enjoy* each period of life while it is here. It is this actual enjoyment, in the sense of realisation, that the hedonist calls happiness, or contentment. And his meaning is, if anything, made clearer by the tendency to translate contentment into sensuous satisfaction. When we think of abstracting the good out of present conditions, we turn at once to the body and the senses, for it is they that offer the greatest certainty of immediate and actual realisation. These sensuous enjoyments are of course insufficient, for others would be required even to fill out the content of the present. But the motive underlying them is fundamentally valid. If life is to be real and substantial, contentment of some sort is necessary. A life made up of a constant strain toward the future and a constant contempt for the present—a life which were exclusively a process of realisation and never the substance of things realised—would be a vain shadow. It is this that impresses the hedonist when, to use the traditional phrase, he 'sits down in a cool hour' and arrives at the conviction that a life without happiness would be of no value.

But now, assuming that our nature calls not only for happi-

<sup>1</sup> Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, beginning of Essay iii, also p. 113. X

ness but for progress, — that we are not satisfied with extracting the good of each moment while we have it, but constantly look forward to a greater good in the future, — how are we still to provide for the interests of happiness? What is the meaning of happiness for a being which is also progressive? Evidently this: each stage of our existence must be drained of its immediate possibilities before a further stage is entered upon. Or, to use the evolutionary conceptions of our last chapter, each stage of our existence must be fully organised, all the factors and tendencies then operative must be coördinated into a solid and compact system, before any further ideal progress is attempted. The higher ideals must be allowed to arise out of the perfected organisation of the present itself; they must never be forced or strained for. A constant movement toward a higher ideal will then at the same time be a state of constant contentment with the present.

Turning now, in the second place, to the conditions of progress, it is evident that considerations of mere progress call for the earliest possible realisation of the highest ideals within our range of appreciation. Progress considered alone commands us to aim directly at perfection without regard to the pain and struggle involved in the effort or to the possibilities of more immediate good which may thereby be sacrificed. And even though we foresee that the situation in the future will be the same as it is now, that however far we go there will always be a higher perfection to be striven for, the command of progress would still be the same: do not stop to realise and enjoy, but press constantly on.

We find, however, that these enjoyments are, to an extent, conditions of progress itself. The demand for progress is conditioned by the necessities of happiness. We cannot, if we would, live a life of constant pain, for pain would shortly put an end to life itself. Evidently, then, in the interests of progress itself, some concessions must be made to happiness. Each stage of our growth must at least be sufficiently organised to

permit of further growth. You cannot build higher until your lower foundations are sufficiently solid ; otherwise your structure will fall to pieces, and you will find yourself back at the beginning. So it is with the structure of human life. A man who is insufficiently grounded in the rudiments of his professional education is likely to fail in it, and even if he make good his ignorance by application in later life, he will find that he has at any rate incurred an unnecessary waste of time, and hence a loss of ultimate accomplishment. So too of the moral life. You cannot expect to cultivate a broad generosity of a genuine sort until you have schooled yourself in the narrower lines of family and household duties. Accordingly, it appears that progress will of itself demand a certain degree of substantial realisation. Each higher stage requires a sufficiently realised lower stage. The progress which is certain to succeed must to an extent be the natural and spontaneous outgrowth of a completed and perfected organisation of present tendencies and impulses.

Now, in view of these relations, it might seem that the most complete and perfect organisation of present tendencies ought to be just that which would most effectively contribute to further progress ; theoretically it would seem that the firmer the foundation, the more massive would be the structure. Or, the more perfect the health of the child, the nobler would be the character and the attainments of the man. Every impulse satisfied ought to be a contribution to the effectiveness of the organism and the character of the agent ; any impulse left unsatisfied should be a source of physical and moral weakness. Therefore, it might be said, the conditions of happiness and of self-realisation are fundamentally identical. If at each moment you realise your whole life, if you maintain a constant condition of complete inner harmony, you not only enjoy a constant contentment with the present, but realise to the full the possibilities of moral growth.

But, as was pointed out in the last chapter, this theoretical identity of moral requirements cannot be established upon an

empirical basis or realised in our practical life. Admitting even a considerable measure of identity between the demands of happiness and these of progress, we still may not assume that the identity is complete.<sup>1</sup> We cannot safely assume that whatever completes our enjoyment of immediate conditions will further our progress toward something better. We are all of us familiar with the type of a man who realises the ideal of animal contentment. He is known commonly as 'the good liver'; and there are good livers who seek animal satisfaction with the same calm steadiness and unity of purpose as that shown in the highest developments of moral life. To say either that these men are in fact living along the line of the greatest moral progress, or that in the absence of higher aims they secure no real contentment,—that their self-satisfaction is after all rendered thin and empty by the thought of higher possibilities neglected,—seems to be a perversion of experience in favour of theory.

And on more general grounds, it seems impossible to reconcile the unity of progress and happiness with the special conditions of our existence. The theory of moral unity assumes, with the theory of the unity of the world in general, a definite completeness within the object. For example, the physical law of conservation of energy assumes that there is a certain fixed quantity of energy in the world; otherwise the law could not be stated as a fact. In the same manner the theory which identifies completeness of immediate satisfaction with the greatest possibilities of moral progress assumes that there is a definitely complete self, which may be wholly realised. But in neither case can the completeness be found within the limits of our experience. The quantity of energy present in the world at any moment cannot possibly be measured. Similarly, if, to use a biological metaphor, you take a cross-section of the self at its present stage

<sup>1</sup> "The attempt to establish an absolute coincidence between virtue and happiness is in ethics what the attempting to square the circle or to discover perpetual motion is in geometry or physics." — LESLIE STEPHEN, *The Science of Ethics*, p. 430.



of development, and preserve it, you will never reach the end of your enumeration of its contents. Suppose, then, I undertake to realise my present self with absolute completeness before attempting to reach a higher plane. The interests to be satisfied are infinite. There are my professional interests, my family interests, my love of the arts, of literature, of travel, and a long list of other interests never to be completely enumerated. The neglect of any of them leaves my life to some degree incomplete. How I long, for example, when I hear one of Beethoven's sonatas finely rendered, to be able to do it for myself. And how I envy the man with perfect animal health who, according to Mr. Spencer's picture of him, sleeps soundly every night, and springs lightly out of bed in the morning, eager to take up the duties of the day. But if I were to undertake to complete myself in all these respects, I should never arrive at any higher plane of development. I should be obliged, among other things, to neglect those professional interests which, from the standpoint of my station and its duties, have the higher moral value, and which are for me the chief conditions of higher moral development. In order to move forward, I am obliged to favour certain portions of myself to the disadvantage of other portions. If I undertook to satisfy my present self in its entirety, I should never grow at all. For that matter I should not even complete the present.

Granting, then, that both happiness and progress stand for a certain degree of substantial attainment, we have to admit that there is a difference between the degree of attainment required for the greatest progress and that required for the greatest enjoyment of happiness. And since the requirements of a moral life include both progress and happiness, any course that we may take will be of necessity a compromise. We have then to determine what sort of a compromise best meets the demands of both.

## 3. THE CONCEPTION OF A MAXIMUM SUSTAINED PROGRESS

It seems to me that the path to a rational attitude lies through a consideration of the following: One of the most obvious facts of our individual and social development is its want of balance and regularity. We find that while, on the whole, the race history is marked by progress, yet the progress is irregular and unsustained. It is only through alternating stages of advance and retreat, of action and reaction, of progress and degeneration, that we arrive finally at a permanently improved condition. A generation of high ideals and noble purposes is succeeded by another in which all the moral forces seem to have been exhausted; and it is only when the decay of moral purpose has itself become unbearable that men rouse themselves and by renewed effort regain the position they have lost and make it secure. The alternation is more striking in some races and nations than in others. There are some in whom the development of political liberty has been relatively constant and sustained, while in others it has been marked by a constant action and reaction between despotism on the one hand, and on the other, an attempt to establish an impossible democratic ideal. The alternation varies also in the different individual lives. Its extreme manifestation is a form of moral hysteria, in which the moral attitude is a constant alternation between a feverish enthusiasm for the immediately impossible and a despairing and spiritless submission to prevalent conditions. But we are all more or less hysterical. To none of us is it given to maintain a constantly patient and calm judgment and a constantly steady courage. We are continually misled, either by our enthusiasms, which tempt us to overlook the difficulties of our situation, or by our fits of exhaustion and discouragement, in which we fail to estimate the conditions up to the point of their real possibilities. And, if anything, the difficulties become greater as we grow in moral earnestness. It is easy to avoid instability where our ideals are not exact-

ing, and when the conflict between ideals and conditions is not very intense. But for one who is deeply in earnest, whose ideals are strenuous, and for whom the moral conflict is vital and personal, stability and control will necessarily be difficult.

Now it is in this aspect of the situation that we arrive at the most concrete summation of the moral problem. It is the instability of our moral life which is the chief source both of retarded development and of unhappiness. If we were without any serious purpose whatever, there would be no loss of happiness in an unstable existence. We might then yield to every changing impulse and derive enjoyment from all. But for creatures with serious moral aims, as it is more or less our nature to be, nothing could be more conducive to misery than a want of steadiness and fixity of purpose. And under most circumstances, and for most natures, nothing could be more ineffective for the ultimate realisation of higher ends. It will be said, by those who so far deny the unity of moral aims as to pronounce them wholly self-contradictory, that the situation as we have it is inevitable. It is through action and reaction that evolution takes place; it is only by neglecting the conditions and running counter to them that we learn what they are; it is only through suffering and disappointment that we are led to something better. And under the conditions of our human existence, this will be always to some extent true. But to admit it to be unconditionally true is inconsistent with any conception of ourselves as moral agents. Granting that, in practice, we learn through failure and disappointment, still to wait for failure to teach us, to go ahead until we are turned back by brute force, is a morally absurd attitude. If there is nothing for it but to be tossed to and fro by passion and circumstance until finally we are driven onward, it is useless to speak of duty and morality. As moral agents we must assume that by taking thought we may regulate our conduct more effectively than it would be regulated by circumstances.

It may be urged, by those who conceive happiness as such

to be morally unnecessary, that there is no special virtue in a regular progress as such. It will be said that a man who passes through the most striking and most constant alternations of moral courage and moral cowardice, and whose life is one long course of nervous unrest may, nevertheless, have at the end a higher development to his own credit, and at the same time be able to show a greater influence upon the development of moral life in his community; his life would then be, from a purely idealistic standpoint, a better life than that in which the moral purpose were more regular. But, granting the result to be possible (and we cannot declare it to be impossible), can we conceive it to be really worth the sacrifice? If we could show that by sacrificing the regularity and happiness of one's own life, one introduced a greater measure of adjustment into the communal life, the individual sacrifice might conceivably be justified. But this is not the natural result. A man whose moral enthusiasms are unstable is usually a highly disturbing factor in the happiness of his community, however he may contribute to the improvement of its moral ideals. We might then, perhaps, justify the sacrifice for all if, with Mr. Spencer, we could look forward to a final state of completed development and a final condition of complete and permanent enjoyment of happiness. But as we have seen, nothing of the sort is in prospect. Whatever contentment is to be got—whatever sense of ends realised—must be sought within the realising process itself. And when we keep this in mind it seems clear that we cannot justify a constant condition of unrest, even in the interests of further progress. If there is any good in life, it must be to some degree and at some time a present good; it cannot be always a good of the future.

I believe, then, that the demands of morality will be best satisfied (remembering that morality demands both progress and happiness, and assuming that neither demand can be fully satisfied without some sacrifice of the other), by a course of behaviour regulated with a view to the maximum of sustained

progress. By 'sustained' progress is meant a course of progress not interrupted by periods of degeneration, in which enthusiasm does not alternate with despair, courage with cowardice. Somewhere between a futile striving after the immediately impossible and an ignoble submission to pain and difficulty there must be a state of control in which we may keep progress toward higher ideals at a constant maximum rate of sustained efficiency. The life which maintains such control will always be the ideal life under the existing circumstances. For the individual it means that life is constantly regulated, on the one hand by a high sense of its value and purpose, on the other by a careful estimate of his particular situation. And the situation will include not only his social and physical environment but all his individual capacities, — capacities for bodily labour, for the endurance of nervous strain, and even for moral courage. The man who best fulfils his individual duty is the man who, with regard to all of these conditions, shows the most constantly steady and clear judgment. For society it means a similarly regulated political and economic development, — a development which proceeds always from the point reached in social organisation and in which the attempt at reorganisation is controlled at every point by the possibilities of maximum permanent improvement.<sup>1</sup>

To appreciate the fundamental and essentially moral significance of sustained effort one should carefully note the different types of moral life. Looking at men from the standpoint of their attitude toward moral progress you will find at one extreme the satisfied sensualist, to whom higher ideals are only an incumbrance, and at the other extreme the moral enthusiast, for whom no ideals are too high to be attainable and who treats the careful calculations of the practical man with lofty contempt. At first sight the two extremes appear to represent very different moral types ; and no doubt we are accustomed to

<sup>1</sup> See Maret's paper on *The Normal Self* and Schiller's *On the Conception 'Ερέργεια' Ακινησίας*, *Mind*, October, 1900.

overlook the futilities of the enthusiast in a consideration of the supposed purity of his motives. But upon further study it is clear that the enthusiast is nothing but a sensualist in disguise. The sensualist himself would say of him, "He loves excitement, and so do I; only we take it in different forms." And the comparison is unquestionably just. A certain measure of ideal enthusiasm is part of an effective moral life, but the extreme enthusiast is morally unstable. His contempt for practical considerations renders him at the same time unmindful of the common rules of honesty; you have not the same guarantee that he will return borrowed money that you may have of the plainer man. And in the end this contempt for ways and means proves only that he is not interested in practical results for themselves, but only so far as the thought of them arouses a pleasurable glow of enthusiasm. Consequently any object may conceivably serve his end; and after realising himself at one moment in the highest flights of a glowing imagination, he may the next moment be realising himself in the lowest depths of animal gratification. Evidently the genuinely moral man is neither the moral enthusiast nor the sensualist. Rather is it he who best combines a high ideal with perfect self-control,—who is animated by a calm and sustained ideal enthusiasm, and at the same time always mindful of the possibilities of substantial results.

It is evident that the maintenance of a balance between ideal aims and practical possibilities will involve a constant process of correction. The balance will be constantly disturbed by a leaning to one side or the other, and it would be unsafe to regard either side as the side of safety. The side to be emphasised, either in personal or social life, will depend upon the situation existent at the time. To illustrate—we find ourselves in the position of the quartermaster of a steamship, who is instructed to keep his ship headed for a given point on the compass. He finds his compass constantly shifting to one side or the other, and he is constantly correcting the variation by



an appropriate turn of the wheel. We face a similar situation in our moral life. At one time we are outrunning our capacities, at another time not living up to them; and the emphasis required for correction will vary with the situation of the moment. The successful moral life will then be that in which the agent is constantly alive to his situation and in which the variations from the ideal course are kept constantly at a minimum.

#### 4. MORAL HEALTH

It is this balance of motives that we have in mind when we define the moral life as the healthy or normal life. I have refrained from using these terms hitherto because their common usage, and even their philosophical usage, is so vague as to render them unsafe except when specially defined. But having now completed our definition of the moral life, its identity with the healthy and normal life will at once be clear. Though hedonism identifies happiness with physical health, and physical with moral health, yet between moral health and happiness there is an important shade of distinction. For happiness implies a relatively passive condition of animal contentment, while it is recognised that the truly healthy life is a life of activity and thus contains the idealistic element of manly struggle against tendencies to degeneration. The morally healthy life is, therefore, not the distinctly animal life, nor is the normal life a mere self-satisfied mediocrity, as the use of the term might often lead us to believe. What we really emphasise in the healthy life is its contrast to feverish and uncertain enthusiasm. The healthy life is above all things a well-balanced life, as opposed to one which is neurotic and hysterical. The commands of moral health may then be said to be these: keep your ideals pure, and keep your feet constantly on firm ground. Or, as they have just been formulated: press constantly forward toward the attainment of your highest ideals, but do not attempt a higher flight than you can permanently sustain.

Leaving aside for the moment all considerations of theory, let us ask ourselves what men in general would regard as a distinctively healthy life under the familiar social conditions. Evidently a healthy life would be one in which enjoyments and responsibilities were constantly proportioned and adjusted to one's stage of development. This would mean that as a child one would enter with full vigour into childish sports and games, responsible only for the duties which profitably belong to childhood, and undisturbed by the graver responsibilities to be assumed later. In youth and early manhood the responsibilities would naturally be increased ; but still there would be a period of play, in the broader sense, a period in which the instinct for bodily activity, which expresses itself in athletic sports and in the love of rough, out-door life would receive a reasonable amount of expression, in which also there would be fair scope for the expression of the romantic side of the sex instinct as it shows itself in the social gaieties of young men and women before they think seriously of the question of marriage. All of these enjoyments are part of a complete and well-proportioned human life. Then, in a healthy life, there would be a proper time for marriage, a point at which one were sufficiently mature to feel the need of home and family and to appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood, yet youthful enough to enter the marriage state with a full measure of joy and enthusiasm, and again sufficiently young to be a companion as well as parent to one's children. Finally, and above all, there is an ideally healthy time for assuming life's heavier responsibilities and burdens ; it is the period of mature life, when the taste for the activities of youth is beginning to die out, when one begins to look instinctively for more important and difficult tasks, and when both mind and body are disciplined for the endurance of labour.

Parallel to the more personal side of moral health there is the industrial and social side. The healthy condition is that of the man who is steadily advancing in industrial or professional efficiency, and in dignity and honour among his fellows,

yet at the same time reasonably content with the social and industrial opportunities which his environment offers him. Under the older conditions where a man beginning as an apprentice might hope, through industry and increased proficiency, to become not only a journeyman in his trade but eventually the independent proprietor of a small business, the conditions of industrial health were clearly present; and it is no doubt a question as to what would be a healthy career under the present changed conditions. It is clear, however, that the healthy attitude is neither that of the stolid wage-earner who looks neither to increased proficiency nor to an advance in honour and profit, nor that of the restless dreamer who, despising the opportunities offered him, looks for a stroke of fortune by which he will be suddenly translated into another social sphere. There are no doubt cases of exceptional ability where the limitations created by education and social surroundings may profitably be ignored, but on the whole they will be few. For most men the conditions both of personal growth and of happiness are to be found in an acceptance of the social and industrial opportunities offered them. It is a healthy industrial condition when a man can satisfy his love of good work and his ambition for personal improvement in the duties which his position offers him. And though a self-respecting man will refuse to regard himself as the natural inferior of any other, still it is a healthy social attitude when a man looks for honour and dignity in the respect of his immediate fellows, and when, instead of forsaking those with whom he is allied by blood, education, and early associations, he places his social ambitions in the cultural advancement and higher social status of his own group.

This sketch, though very imperfect, will probably nevertheless be sufficient to illustrate in a concrete fashion the adjustment in a healthy and normal life between the conditions of happiness and those of ideal progress. There is at every point a certain healthy balance between responsibilities and enjoy-

ments. As moral beings we cannot at any time accept a life of mere enjoyment, unqualified by the presence of duty and responsibility. Even the child is not satisfied with play alone. His moral nature demands that play should be accompanied by some form of work. And for that matter his play itself would not be wholly satisfying if it were conceived by him as *mere* play. His interest in it is due largely to the fact that the activities which his elders call 'play' are for him matters of weight and importance. On the other hand, it is clear that this healthy graduation of responsibilities is the condition which is most favourable for sustained effectiveness in after life. A child who fails to secure the enjoyments appropriate to child life and who, as a child, is saddled with the responsibilities of an adult, is thereby handicapped for the performance of the duties of mature life. When the time comes at which he should be normally most effective and most productive, his courage and enthusiasm are already diminished by the fulfilment of an undue weight of responsibility at an immature period. This is true of all enjoyments that belong to a healthy existence. A man who in childhood has never enjoyed the protecting care of home and parents, who has never known what it is to be youthful and to share the enthusiasms of youth, or who has never known what it is to be in love and to be loved, is so much the worse for it; he is just so much the weaker when he encounters the difficulties of mature life.

Now it is clear, of course, that the conditions of health are not altogether within our power. Something depends, in the first place, upon the original constitution of our nature. Our impulses are from the start not altogether fitted to work together. For example, there are the animal and the romantic aspects of the sex instinct; the animal instinct develops early and calls imperatively for satisfaction long before a man knows himself sufficiently well to safely bind himself in marriage; and the resulting internal conflict is to a degree both physically and morally unhealthy. And in some natures such

conflicts are unavoidably sharper and more intense than in others. Then again something depends upon external conditions, which are also not altogether under our control. I cannot make it certain that when an instinct comes to maturity, it shall find a fitting object in which to express itself. Nor can I altogether adjust my responsibility to my maturity, for the graver responsibilities may be prematurely thrust upon me, and I cannot very well, on the ground of immaturity, refuse to recognise a duty which clearly comes my way. For example, under normal conditions the care and education of younger brothers and sisters should not be intrusted to a girl of fifteen, but if no one else accepted the responsibility, she could not reasonably decline it on the ground of her youth. But in the face of all these limitations there is a certain measure of control within our power. Given a particular set of conditions, there is a certain order of duties most favourable for sustained efficiency. I may at any point rest contentedly upon what is done and yield myself to present enjoyment; I may turn to the next immediate duty; or I may neglect the latter in favour of duties with which I am not at present concerned. Among these three possibilities it is the man who with constant care chooses the next immediate duty, and with constant industry performs it, who best realises the ideal of a normal and healthy life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For theories of moral progress see Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*; Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, A Syllabus*; Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*. On the conception of moral health see Leslie Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*. See also Taylor, *The Problem of Conduct*, ch. v; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essays v and vi and Concluding Remarks.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCRETE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE MORAL ATTITUDE

It will render our formulation of the moral attitude somewhat more definite if we spend a closing chapter in concrete illustration. The illustrations which follow are not intended to constitute a system of conduct, yet they are probably sufficiently varied to cover the more important aspects of the moral life.

#### 1. THE DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP

Among the many problems which occupy us to-day, probably none is more perplexing to a thoughtful man than the problem of his duty as citizen toward public policy. And among the many questions of public policy there is none which is now of such vital importance as that commonly defined as the 'social problem,' — the question, namely, as to how far society is to be reorganised upon a more or less socialistic basis. At the present time there are probably few candid and intelligent men who will deny that a problem exists. The concentration of power in the form of wealth has reached a point where it is clearly dangerous, if not to our material welfare, at any rate to our personal liberties.<sup>1</sup> The question is, therefore, not whether we shall advocate — or accept — some measure of reorganisation, but what manner and method of reorganisation should be adopted, and what would be the attitude of a conscientious citizen toward the matter of reorganisation in general. It is the last part of this question which will occupy us here. The first part,

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xiv, 3.



being a question of detail, belongs to economics rather than to ethics ; and at any rate it could not be dealt with here.

Now in the matter of personal attitude we are confronted with three possibilities. There is an ultra-conservative attitude which refuses to do anything, an ultra-progressive attitude which proposes to replace the present order by a wholly new order, and a liberal attitude which proposes through tentative experiment to bring about a gradual reorganisation upon the basis of the present order. The ultra-progressive is the attitude, generally speaking, of the socialists, using the term 'socialist' in its narrower and more popular sense. Socialism, we may say, is idealism applied to the social question. Here, as elsewhere, the idealist is marked by a refusal to consider present conditions. Whatever their other differences, there is a point upon which nearly all socialists agree, namely, the utter rottenness of the present organisation of society. As a result they are rarely interested in present political issues. For them these are never the real issues. The real issue is not the trust question, nor the tariff question, nor the question of imperialism, but the question of the organisation of society as a whole. To consider any of the immediately pressing questions is to waste our time upon side issues. Accordingly, a socialist more commonly refuses to coöperate in any attempt to reform the existing laws. In his mind this is merely patching up a rotten fabric.<sup>1</sup>

If our formulation of the moral attitude is correct, both the ultra-conservative and the ultra-progressive attitudes are fundamentally immoral. The immoral quality of the former is self-evident. And that of the latter should not be difficult to estimate.

<sup>1</sup> In some sense every liberally minded man of to-day may be called a socialist, and the above will probably be unjust to many who bear the name. The term is used in the narrower sense for the same reason that many of liberal tendencies refuse to apply it to themselves, — because there is a marked difference in temper and attitude between the socialistic theorist and agitator and one who, while admitting that radical changes will eventually be necessary, prefers to begin with the needs and conditions of the present.

We tend to overlook the socialistic disregard of present conditions in view of the ideals which socialists aim to realise. But the social question is not merely a question of ideals. And for that matter those who call themselves socialists have no monopoly of socialistic ideals ; it may be regarded as the growing sentiment of to-day that only in some form of socialistic (or, at least, *more* socialistic) organisation will a better condition of society be found. The practical question of duty relates, however, to the policy through which social reforms may be profitably established. And here it seems that a proposal to sweep away the present system and to introduce another which is wholly new and untried must always be the outcome of a certain disregard of the complexity of conditions which a social order has to meet. Any one who has given his attention to mechanical invention knows well enough that it is impossible to anticipate in his drawing all the conditions to be met by his machine. Success is attained only through cautious and tentative experiment, one modification being followed by another until all the conditions are met. Now the social organism is incomparably more complex than any machine that was ever devised. And the present order itself is the fulfilment of conditions too complex for any one successfully to analyse. Admitting, for example, that the trust system is a system of extortion and that it constitutes a grave political danger, still you have to remember that it is through this system that we obtain the necessities of life. And it may be that through this system they are more efficiently supplied than by any methods which preceded it. This is the feature of the situation which radical policies tend constantly to ignore. It would be impossible to construct *a priori* another system which could be relied upon to do as well. This does not mean that we are quietly to acquiesce in the present order, nor yet that we are to allow the social development to take its 'natural' course — for we as members of society and moral agents have something to say with regard to the course it shall take — but merely that no substantial reform is

to be expected except through the gradual and careful modification of present conditions.

Substantial social advancement can only be a matter of growth, — that is to say, the newer system must be in some sense a continuation of the old and not a revolutionary substitution. Generally speaking, a revolution is the worst way out of a difficulty. It sweeps away the existing organisation without an adequate preparation for anything to take its place, and, in the period of disorganisation which follows, society becomes a prey to demagogues and adventurers. And in the end it fails really to solve the problem; for revolution means commonly that action is taken before the time for action is ripe, before the cultural conditions have been reached upon which the new order may be successfully maintained. This was shown clearly enough in the French Revolution. Probably no movement has ever been instituted with fairer social ideals or resulted in a short time in a lower depth of social degradation. It turned out that the French as a whole were unprepared for democratic government; they had not yet developed the intelligence and self-control, the spirit of reasonableness and toleration, upon which the success of democratic movements must ever depend. This does not mean that there are no cases where a sudden and violent change could conceivably be justified, for there are times when social evils have become so concentrated as to admit of no other remedy. But of all remedies for social evils a revolution is the last and worst.

It may of course be claimed that the present is one of those crises where none but radical measures can be used. And no sufficient answer could be made to the claim within the limits of our present discussion. But we have to remember that the problematic character of the moral and social situation did not arise with us and will not end with us. The recognition of this fact is a highly important factor in determining the moral attitude as a whole. When we remember that every man has his moral problem and every generation its social

problem, and that, judged from the immediate standpoint of the agent, one problem is about as big and as difficult as another, it becomes much less likely that our own situation is to any serious degree exceptional, or that the solution is not largely to be found in the improvement of conditions already established. Now when we turn to the present situation, it may perhaps be readily admitted that existing institutions (such as the present definition of property) are in need of thorough revision, but it is at the same time clear that the existing institutions offer of themselves a large measure of relief which is not utilised. In other words, we are not yet living up to the institutions that we have. It is a common practice to speak of the trusts as oppressing the people. But an impartial inquirer might well ask how this could possibly be true of a land where every man is a citizen and is allowed to vote. And the answer brings us back to the fact that the great majority of voters are too narrow-minded to see through personal and party prejudices, too unintelligent to get at the real situation, and have too little moral insight to distinguish an honest man from a rogue. They are thus very largely at the mercy of the party leaders. But if this is an evil under present conditions, what would it be under institutions which would, if anything, call for a choice of far more responsible and intelligent public officials than we have at present? It is evident, of course, that we cannot postpone the reformation of institutions until men are perfectly intelligent, but it is equally clear that the first condition of substantial reform is some general intelligence with regard to civic duties; and this intelligence will not be developed except through the medium of immediate issues.

We have further to remember, in dealing with the social problem, that a knowledge of conditions is necessary not only for substantial results but for ideally correct results. The social reformer seeks ideal justice, but justice is necessarily retrospective. To take a simple illustration, if a thief has stolen my watch and I afterwards find him with it, I am clearly justified

in reclaiming it without paying an indemnity. But if I find it upon the person of another who has purchased it in perfect good faith, using reasonable precautions, the case is different. If I claim that he is responsible for any loss that may come to him through the dishonesty of those from whom he buys, he may justly retort that I am responsible for allowing my property to be stolen and to get into the market. The truth is that we are both the victims of unfortunate circumstances, and justice would demand that each bear a share in the loss. We find the same relations in the social problem. Granting, for example, with the single-taxers, that land is properly public property and should never have passed into private hands, still it remains true that such private ownership has been recognised as perfectly good; and on the basis of this recognition men have bought land with money that was in every respect honestly earned. They now find themselves, let us say, in the position of innocent purchasers of stolen goods, with society, the rightful owner, claiming restitution. It is very evident that justice, in the strict sense, is confined neither to one side nor the other. If justice is to be done, it must be through a careful examination of existing economic conditions. We must discover, if possible, what the ownership of land represents for those who now hold it, not what it would represent under ideal conditions of distribution. And any measure of justice that we shall obtain will be a matter of reasonable adjustment and compromise.

It is a very common assumption that an attitude of reasonableness toward existing social conditions shows a want of moral fibre. We are likely to assume that the only test of morality is to be found in a willingness to suffer ostracism and persecution. And of course this is a test one must be ready to stand when necessary. But in the meantime the attitude of reason and patience is often more difficult as well as more effective. It often requires more courage to deal calmly and persistently with adverse conditions, to work in harmony with

men for whom one has no respect, to preserve an attitude of self-control toward corrupt public officials and the influences which lie behind them, than to utter an open denunciation of the whole system. There is a certain stimulus in open conflict ; it gives one a sense of heroism and adds to the situation a dramatic element which makes moral courage relatively easy. It is quite a different matter to preserve one's moral courage and one's faith in ideals under the prosaic conditions of constant sustained effort.

We may say, then, that except in the most extreme cases, the endeavour of a good citizen will be to improve the social conditions on the basis of the conditions themselves, — to 'purify' the existing political system rather than to overthrow it. The good citizen will thus be distinguished, on the one hand, from those who refuse to interest themselves in public affairs ; on the other hand from those who refuse to recognise existing conditions. As distinct from the latter he will give his constant attention to immediate issues and his active support to all movements promising any measure of substantial improvement. And he will be ready, to some extent, to sacrifice his personal convictions in order to coöperate with others. In other words, good citizenship, like all other genuine virtues, is a matter largely of intelligence and self-control. The good citizen will not only look forward to study ideal conditions ; he will look carefully at both the past and present to see what point we have reached in the evolutionary process and what the next step should be from our present standpoint. All of this may be done by one whose conception of an ideally just organisation of society is far removed from anything we have at present.

## 2. MY DUTY TO SOCIETY

In the present section we distinguish the duty which one owes to society as a private individual from the duty which one owes as a citizen. The two aspects of social duty are often



confused, and it is assumed as self-evident that a man ought to show in his private practice the same form of behaviour which he would seek to have established, legally or otherwise, as binding upon all. We hear it said that a rich man who believes in an equal distribution of goods ought to set the example by distributing his wealth and abandoning the privileges which wealth confers. But it does not follow that because a certain form of behaviour is desirable when practised by all, it is equally desirable when practised by a few. It is possible, for example, that the English rule of turning to the left is a better rule of the road than our rule of turning to the right, but until the better rule were generally established, it would certainly be wrong for the individual to put it into practice.

*(a) The Acceptance of Unearned Rewards*

The increase of knowledge with regard to economic conditions has had the effect, directly or indirectly, of bringing to consciousness many difficult moral problems; and one which concerns a large number of persons is the question of moral attitude toward unearned rewards. Without committing ourselves to an economic discussion we may no doubt make the distinction between rewards that are earned by service to society, and those which come to one merely as the result of social conditions; for example, the coal miner, who digs the coal out of the earth, performs a social service and undoubtedly earns his wages, while, in comparison, the mine owner, who charges the public a profit upon the coal delivered, merely derives an advantage from a public need. This is not to say that the mine owner renders no service whatever, but merely that, so far as his profit represents mere ownership of the mine, as distinct from active superintendency, he receives a reward without any corresponding service. The distinction that we find here may be traced everywhere in the world of business. Some profits are earned, some unearned, yet

equally legitimate from the standpoint of present legal and social institutions. The farmer is paid for raising wheat for public consumption; the speculator buys wheat and, by merely holding it in the face of a public demand, forces the price upward; or he buys land on the edge of a growing city and obtains for himself the increase of value created by the further growth of the city. On the other hand, as in the case of the mine owner, profits earned and unearned are everywhere found more or less together. And in practice they are often not easily distinguishable. For example, the farmer as well as the speculator may hold his wheat for a rise in price, while, on the other hand, it is not certain that some of the speculative activities have no social value. Yet in its broad outlines there is a clear distinction between rewards earned and unearned. Some rewards represent a fair return for social service, while others represent nothing but accidental advantages conferred by social conditions, — advantages which, in a community fully conscious of its communal interests, would not be allowed to exist.

Now probably every one will admit that the possibility of such advantages should be removed. Whatever be the ethics of distribution it is clear that, so far as we are able to distinguish earned and unearned rewards, no man should be free to appropriate more than he earns through social service, and all values that are the product simply of social development should belong to the community through whose activity they have been created. It would therefore be the duty of every citizen to endeavour to bring about a reorganisation of social institutions upon this basis. And, if anything, the duty rests more imperatively upon those by whom these private advantages are at present enjoyed. We may say, further, that a conscientious man whose eyes are open to the situation will prefer not to take up, as a life occupation, one in which the returns are mainly of this unearned character. But in the meantime there are opportunities which arise naturally in the course of the most legiti-

mate forms of business. Suppose that, as a farmer, I feel reasonably certain that, through a failure of the crops in some distant land, the price of wheat is bound to rise to a price that will pay me several times for the labour of cultivation, is it wrong for me to hold my wheat for the higher price? Or suppose that with some capital at my disposal I obtain private information regarding certain deposits of coal or oil, is it wrong for me to keep my information to myself and profit by it? Or again, suppose that I am given 'inside information' regarding the course of a projected railway, is it wrong for me to profit by it through a quiet purchase of land along the line? A pure idealist would answer all of these questions with an unqualified affirmative. If such profits are really unearned, he would say, you have no right to touch them. But here, as elsewhere, the idealist fails to state just what the alternative form of action would be. If a refusal to accept such unearned profits would result in bringing society nearer to a condition where the appropriation of unearned benefits were impossible, such refusal would then be clearly an imperative duty. But it is probable that, under present conditions, the benefit which I refused to accept would go to another who had done no more to earn it than myself. I might then, by refusing to enter the transaction, acquit myself of the responsibility of receiving unearned rewards, but I should have done nothing to alter the institution itself. And if we look at the matter from the positive side, it becomes clear that I am in a measure responsible for the use of opportunities that fall in my path. It is true that this argument may be easily abused, yet it has none the less a certain validity. If, through a defect in the social organisation, opportunities for unearned profits are clearly thrown in my way, then I become personally responsible for their use, and I do not fulfil my duty by simply passing them on to another. The extent of responsibility depends of course upon the nature of the circumstances,—upon the directness with which the opportunity is offered, upon its call for time

and attention, and upon its importance when taken in connection with other objects ; for example, an enterprise which would be justifiable enough for a merchant would be clearly unjustifiable for a capable physician if it took him away from his practice.

How, then, is this responsibility to be fulfilled ? To this question it is difficult to give a concrete answer ; for the present organisation of society offers no exact method whereby unearned values can be returned to their rightful owners. Evidently the responsibility is to be fulfilled mainly through an additional measure of service to society as a whole, and more especially in an additional effort to remove the defects in the social organisation whereby such advantages are made possible. On a basis of a genuine morality it would be the holders of privileges rather than those deprived of them from whom we should expect the more active criticism of existing conditions.

### (b) *The Administration of Wealth*

The same question is raised by the possession of wealth. Without asking whether a proper distribution of wealth would be an equal distribution, or whether there should be any private property whatever, it is safe to say that the present distribution is far from meeting the demands either of justice or of social welfare. Leaving out of consideration the immense sums acquired by notoriously dishonest and predatory methods, there are probably few private fortunes, however honest the intention with which they were accumulated, which do not, in some sense, represent unearned profits derived from the exploitation of some public utility, — profits which, in a society conscious of its communal interests, could not have been accumulated. It therefore goes without saying that it is the duty of every citizen, rich or poor, to work for some ultimate reorganisation of property rights by which a more equitable distribution may be secured and maintained. But, in the mean-

time, what ought one to do with the wealth which one happens to possess? Let us take an extreme case. Let us suppose that the wealth has been inherited from one who acquired it by clearly dishonest methods. The idealist would urge the possessor to sell all that he has and give to the poor. Many also of a more conservative tendency would hold that a man ought not to touch wealth that represented the profits of dishonesty and injustice. But here again it seems that the possession of wealth, or the right of inheritance, brings with it a certain important social responsibility, a responsibility which is only increased by any doubt with regard to the methods by which the wealth has been accumulated; and it would seem that an indiscriminate distribution of such wealth constitutes an evasion of one's responsibility rather than a fulfilment of it. Here, as everywhere, we have to consider results. Suppose that the wealth of the country could be massed, and then evenly distributed, what would be the result? Certainly not any improvement in social conditions; and not any permanent advance toward an equitable distribution. Or suppose that a large fortune, which the possessor felt to have been dishonestly acquired, were by way of restitution turned into the public treasury; under present conditions the only probable result of such action would be a career of public extravagance, for the benefit chiefly of politicians and contractors, or at best a reduction of taxes for those who chiefly ought to pay, without any corresponding benefit to society as a whole. It would seem, then, that the possessor of wealth is directly responsible for its economical application to intrinsically useful ends. This would mean that whatever distribution is made should be made through the agency of reliable and responsible persons for purposes of specific and approved value. It may also mean, according to circumstances, that, during his lifetime, the holder retain control of some, and perhaps of all of it. There is no reason also why he should not live in reasonable comfort, and even, within certain limits, reserve for himself advantages which others may be unable to enjoy. The whole question of moral attitude

resolves itself into a question of the use to which these advantages are applied. The man of wealth, even of moderate wealth, has a wide range of superior social opportunity. With his living assured and his family provided for, he may take a stand with regard to public policy, social abuses, and political corruption, which others could not sustain. For the expenses incurred in a campaign for social or political reform he has already the necessary funds; and his wealth means in itself a large social influence. The greater his advantages the greater must be his responsibility. This responsibility is not fulfilled by the contribution of superfluous income to charitable or educational institutions, nor again by a sentimental renunciation of reasonable comforts and utilities, but only by a devotion of self as a whole and of opportunity as a whole to the cause of permanent human improvement.

(c) *The Payment of Services*

Another important problem of this class has reference to the payment for services. Without raising the question as to how we shall determine the just value of services, it is safe to say that it is often far from represented in their market value. It is very clear that certain classes of unskilled labour are estimated at rates which represent neither their cost, in terms of effort, nor their contribution to social welfare. And here, as before, it goes without saying that it is the duty of every one to do what he can to reform the system. But, in view of the actual conditions, what am I to do in an individual transaction? Am I to pay for services at their real value or at their market value? We may bring the question to a point by a reference to the 'sweating system,' which prevails in the manufacture of clothing. Under this system work that is highly important for the welfare of the community is paid for at rates which will support only the most miserable form of existence. It is our custom to abuse the clothing manufacturer for paying such rates. But it is not clear what else he can do. If, as it is claimed, these rates are determined by competition, an employer paying



for labour at its objective social value would soon be obliged to give up his occupation; and he would be confronted with a similar problem in any other occupation. In the meantime it must be noted that, bad as the system is, it fulfils a necessary want, not only for the consumer, but for the producer. Granting that the life of a clothing operative is a miserable one, still he must live. Under existing conditions the employer is the agency through which the possibility of a livelihood reaches him; and if the employer is to continue to act in this capacity, it is necessary that the wages paid should be at least low enough to warrant the maintenance of his business upon a stable basis. It would seem, then, that if he is to fulfil his responsibility, he must continue, as long as the conditions remain the same, to pay for labour at less than its objective value. The question of duty is here, as before, a question of general attitude. While the employers of labour plead competition as an excuse for low wages, still it is true that under the supposed pressure of competition many of them become inordinately rich, — which is a clear proof that low wages are not always so necessary as it is claimed. And granting that men are forced by competition to pay less than a fair value, there is still a difference between a necessary highest rate and a possible lowest. An employer who viewed his occupation in the light of a social responsibility would aim at the former rather than at the latter. But, more than this, he would consider it his duty as a citizen, and, in view of his knowledge of the conditions, his special duty as employer, to give his active support to all movements for the establishment of a proper legal standard of the conditions under which labour should be employed. Such conditions would no doubt limit the possibility of undue profits, but they would also limit the forces of competition. It need scarcely be said that this is not a very common attitude among employers; as a rule they prefer unrestricted liberty of competition, at least so far as competition has to do with reducing the price of labour or increasing the task of the labourer.

*(d) The Social Problem and the Moral Attitude*

In all these relations there is a certain margin of choice between the lowest possible moral attitude and the highest which is practically effective. The margin is narrower when one acts in the private capacity of an individual dealing with other individuals than when one acts in the broader capacity of a citizen, because in the former situation one is more at the mercy of existing social and economic conditions. Yet even in private practice the margin of choice is considerable. Granting that it is impossible or, on the whole, inadvisable, to give to others what, from an ideal standpoint, justly belongs to them, there is still a marked difference between the private conduct of one who would sincerely prefer an ideal situation and of one who regards the existing situation merely as an opportunity for private advantage. There is a difference in all his individual transactions between the man of wealth who regards his private property as a public trust, and one who regards it merely as an opportunity for further accumulation ; between the employer who has the welfare of his operatives at heart, and one who thinks of them merely as useful instruments ; or, again, between the private purchaser who prefers to pay a fair price and one who is looking only for a bargain. How far it is right and best for an individual to ignore the existing conditions will depend upon the extent of his public influence and upon the extent of coöperation which he may expect. We are sometimes warned against attempting any reform in our individual capacity because, it is said, prices and markets, and social institutions generally, are the outcome of unchangeable economic conditions ; they are the result of the invariable law of supply and demand. But the invariable law of supply and demand includes the variable factor of human desire, since it is human desire that determines the demand. We must then assume that the responsibility for economic conditions rests upon ourselves as moral agents, and to some extent upon each as an individual. As an isolated individual

my protest against sweat-shop work, and my refusal to purchase sweat-shop goods, may have little effect ; it may not pay for the trouble and inconvenience and for the effort withdrawn from other more fruitful objects. But if I coöperate with a sufficient number of other individuals, our united expression of moral repugnance (to say nothing of other influences that may be exerted) will in the end make it profitable for merchants and manufacturers to meet our demands, and will thus alter the economic conditions. To the extent that coöperation seems probable, it will then be my duty to pay the higher price for the work that is better paid, or that is done under the more sanitary conditions.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, in the exercise of citizenship that the margin of choice and opportunity is the greater ; and it is especially here that the larger opportunity for substantial social progress is in the hands of the favoured individuals. It is therefore upon them that the larger responsibility rests. But what the fulfilment of such responsibility would mean is best shown by contrast with the more common attitude. We may accept the common argument to the effect that social and economic institutions should not be suddenly and rudely disturbed ; we have to recognise the impracticable and futile character of many of the proposed schemes for social reform ; and perhaps we should judge leniently those who simply accept the advantages which come to them as the inevitable result of our social organisation. Yet, in view of the advantages thus enjoyed, we ought to expect from them a larger sense of responsibility for social improvement ; and in view of the opportunities for substantial and permanent results which these advantages confer, we ought also to expect a larger measure of actual attainment. What we more commonly find is that the possession of advantage is used as an instrument for the perpetuation and increase of advantage. We find, for example, an already too profitable

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that certain results of this kind have already been accomplished by the Consumers' League.

industry using its power to obtain, through a protective tariff, or a subsidy, a still larger measure of profit, and for this purpose using all the possible methods of bribery and intimidation. We find it also watering its stock, refusing to publish its accounts, subsidising the public press, and thus deceiving the public from whom the concession is demanded. Transactions of this kind are to be traced usually to corporations, the holders of whose stock are often not widely known; and when the holdings are numerous and widely distributed, the individual stockholders are often not clearly responsible. In some cases they are women, leading pure and unselfish lives, actively engaged in charities, and innocent of any knowledge of business conditions. But when we raise the question with individuals of the stockholding class, we find it difficult as a rule to arouse any protest against the dishonest methods by which their dividends are increased. And among the favoured classes generally there is a prevalent disposition to deny that any social problem exists, and a consequent refusal to admit any question of reform. As stated before, the moral question is ultimately a question of attitude; and it is this *attitude* on the part of many individuals of the favoured classes which largely justifies the popular execration of the favoured classes as a whole. It is putting the matter at its lowest terms to say that if they accept the advantages which society unwittingly gives them, they should at least refrain from using these advantages for the aggravation of social abuse.

(e) *The Use of Personal Capacities*

The foregoing problems have been introduced because they illustrate most strikingly the personal and moral side of the existing social problem. Responsibility for social reform is, however, not peculiar to those who belong to the distinctively privileged class, — or rather it should be said that the privileged class, in the proper use of the term, is of large extent and likely to include most of those who give intelligent considera-

tion to the broader problems of conduct. Every college graduate has enjoyed privileges denied to most of his brethren, and, generally speaking, these privileges give him an advantage in the acquisition of material goods. For that matter, considering the large class of men who earn their living by poorly paid manual labour, and the educational limits which, among other conditions, have restricted them to manual work, every man of moderate education and social position may be regarded as belonging in a measure to the privileged class.

But the moral question is not wholly a question of a return to society for favours received. The growing complexity of social conditions and the growth of reflection upon social relations are rendering it increasingly impossible for the individual to separate himself and his personality from the society in which he lives or to assign any definite limits to his social responsibility. In view of the *quasi* family relation which in a measure holds between all men as such it becomes impossible to regard my duty to society as limited to a return for value received. If all men are my brothers and members of the same family, I must be answerable, not merely for what society has done for me, but for what I am able to do in the cause of social improvement. In other words, I must be in some sense responsible to society not only for the advantages conferred by social position but for those conferred by superior abilities. Every man whose abilities are superior to the meanest may be said to enjoy advantages beyond the reach of his less gifted brethren. And for every man who is conscious of his kinship to his kind it becomes a question as to how far and in what manner he ought to use these advantages for the general welfare of society.

In facing this problem, we must again distinguish between duty to society under ideal social conditions and duty to society from the standpoint of one's position in the present social organisation. Whether my ends be selfish or social, I must to some extent conform to the existing social conditions. Any

advantages which these conditions give me constitute for me a special social responsibility, and I do not fulfil this responsibility by simply renouncing them. A physician or a business man, who is able to command large rewards for his services and refuses to accept more than an average and ordinary fee, may indeed reduce his own share of the social product ; but he does not in any large sense benefit society ; he simply relieves his patients or customers of obligations which in many cases they are well able to meet. It is true that even here he may contribute to the improvement of social standards by restricting himself to demands commonly recognised as decent and moderate in view of the services rendered. It is one thing merely to conform to social conditions, and quite another to push one's advantage to its extreme limit ; and the least one can do is to conform to the established standards of generosity. But there are limits to which superior abilities and the advantages conferred by them can be safely or profitably ignored. And the question of duty to society will be a question rather of the use to be made of special advantages than of their acceptance or rejection. A physician or business man whose income is large acquires, through this source itself, a larger freedom and a larger opportunity for improving the conditions and raising the moral standards within his sphere of activity. He also acquires larger opportunities for public service in a broader field. And in the end it is the whole attitude of the man toward his situation which determines his moral character. It is a question of whether he is exerting his powers forward in the direction of higher and more generous social conditions or using them merely to perpetuate private advantage.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. MY DUTY TO MY NEIGHBOUR

In the preceding section we have been considering one's individual duty toward society at large. A word should now be said regarding one's duty toward particular individuals. We have

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of this section see Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay. iv, "My Station and its Duties."



here the familiar question of selfishness *v.* self-sacrifice. How far am I called upon to prefer my neighbour's good to my own? Now it is evident, in considering this question, that something must depend upon the relation which I hold toward the neighbour in question. It cannot be for the good of men in general that individuals should bestow their services upon any other individuals who should happen to need them. There are certain persons who by virtue of their relationship to me have a prior claim upon my attention. Admitting that all men are my kinsmen, still those of my immediate family, — wife, children, parents, brothers, and sisters, — are closer of kin than any others. A morality which overlooks this fact is guilty of a sentimental inversion of the true relations; in calling all men 'brothers' without distinction of degree, it substitutes a relatively metaphorical kinship for the more genuine one. But something must depend also upon the character of the person with whom I am dealing. It is not a question merely of securing a return for services rendered. If this were the decisive element in the problem, the term 'self-sacrifice' would have no genuine meaning. But surely I am not bound to consider to the same extent the interests of the rogue who would swindle me and of the friend who asks my help in time of need.<sup>1</sup> Nor, to state the point more narrowly, am I to the same degree bound to serve the pretended friend who regards me as a useful connection and the friend who has a genuine interest in myself and my welfare. Admitting again that all men are in a sense brothers, it

<sup>1</sup>A landlord who should grant an extension to a deserving tenant would merely be doing his duty, provided no other obligations were thereby neglected; and it might be his duty to overlook a certain lack of desert, in the matter of previous forethought. But one who should grant indefinite extensions to the shiftless and irresponsible, would be doing, not more than his duty, but less. Granting that he did not endanger the fulfilment of his own obligations, he would still be creating conditions of competition unjust to other landlords. And, aside from this, is it not true that the mental attitude which is careless about the collection of debts is likely to be equally careless about paying them?

must still be true that those who are bound to me by sympathy are in a more genuine sense my brothers than those bound to me by self-interest ; and so far as my duty to my neighbour rests upon the principle of human unity, the former have a superior claim to my services.

What is then my duty to my neighbour? What has just been said seems to bring us back to the vulgar rule of loving your friends and hating your enemies. And this is not far removed from the ancient rule of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' which is now repudiated by all enlightened persons. But the ancient rule has a certain degree of justification, — at any rate so far as it recognises the duty of discrimination. Of course no decent man will nurse the feeling of hatred toward any one ; and every more generous man would prefer to live not only at peace but in relations of brotherly sympathy with all his neighbours. But each of us finds his capacity for sympathy limited. Granting that from an ideal standpoint one's sympathies *ought* to be 'as broad as humanity itself,' still you have to recognise the fact that they cannot be extended indefinitely without losing some of their substance. And my capacity for active service is still more limited. Recognising these limits, it is evident that in serving others I must exercise a certain discrimination between those who are well disposed toward me and those who are ill disposed. Though I may not in any case hate my enemy, nor, except under the necessity of self-preservation, do him any injury, yet it is clear that the friend who loves me deserves more of my service than the enemy who hates me. The difference between the moral man and the immoral man is here, as everywhere, a difference of attitude. The moral attitude presupposes a desire to extend the relations of generosity and brotherly kindness as widely as possible. Granting that my attitude toward others must be regulated by theirs toward me, and that it will be necessary to regard some persons as relatively unworthy of consideration, and to refuse to sacrifice my interests for their benefit, still if I am a genuinely

moral man, I will see to it that this necessity is not due to a want of generosity on my part. I shall endeavour not merely to return as much service and good will as I receive but to give more — and as much more as, in justice to all my duties, I am capable of giving.

#### 4. PERSONAL DUTIES

##### (a) *The Obligations of Honour*

The foremost and most difficult problem from the standpoint of personal morality is that of the obligations of honour. A man of high moral sense is tempted to assume that with regard to honour no problem exists, and to hold that a man must be strictly and absolutely honourable under all circumstances. And our naïve common sense gives a certain support to his position by its tendency to make the regard for truth an absolute duty, — a duty which must in all cases be fulfilled to the letter without regard to the consequences to follow. We feel that veracity is so fundamental an element in the moral life that we fear to tamper with it by admitting the necessity of any qualifications. And yet, it seems, when we extend our view beyond the more ordinary requirements of truth and honour, and endeavour to arrive at a full appreciation of all that the conceptions demand, we find that we cannot any longer fulfil these obligations in their complete and unqualified sense. Our common conception of truth-telling relates chiefly to overt utterance ; and our common conception of honesty is an expression of the established rules of commercial honesty. But the demands of an ideal of honour are far more exacting than those recognised by the conventional standards. We do not fulfil the obligations of truth by merely refraining from the overt utterance of falsehood. No doubt the utterance of a lie is more repulsive to our moral sense than mere silence. And it is usually the greater crime ; for more commonly it is the expression of a certain willingness to deceive. But silence has its own positive implications ; and

when a question is raised, a silence which allows a misconception to pass is hardly less an act of deceit than the utterance of a falsehood. Nor do we fulfil the obligations of honour, in any complete sense, by merely paying our just debts, refraining from the misrepresentation of goods offered for sale, and fulfilling the obligations which we have voluntarily and expressly contracted. The question of honour is involved in every act of our lives. A clergyman, or a teacher of economics or philosophy, who holds certain advanced views not revealed in the pulpit or class room fails, in the strict sense, to meet the obligations of honour. A physician is not strictly honourable when he hesitates to speak openly to a wealthy patient with regard to his imaginary ills. And an artist is not strictly honourable when he sacrifices his ideals of art to secure recognition. But the problem is not confined to the professional and, in a general sense, educational activities. Whatever a man does involves the implication of something as true or false. When an employee is respectful in his behaviour to an employer whom he despises, his attitude contains a false implication; it is a misrepresentation of his real beliefs and sentiments. When, for the sake of avoiding a disagreeable scene, I extend the forms of courtesy to a man whom I regard as unworthy of social recognition, I am again, in the strict sense, untruthful. And for that matter, I am not strictly truthful when I strain my resources, and draw upon the funds set aside for an emergency, in order to present a conventionally reputable appearance; such action amounts really to a claim to resources which I do not possess. We do not dispose of the question of honour by saying that these are mere forms, without real meaning, which therefore do not deceive any one; for no forms are wholly meaningless. Granting that, when I go through the form of respect to my employer, every one, including the employer himself, knows it to be a mere form, still the fulfilment of the formal requirement means that, for some reason, I dare not express my real sentiments,—in other words, that I dare

not be absolutely truthful. And a lie is not less a lie because it is commonly known to be such. It appears, then, that a complete fulfilment of the obligations of honour would involve an absolute sincerity and openness in every act performed. Our external action with regard to men and things would be a complete and unqualified expression of our internal sense of value.

When we thus complete our definition of honour, it seems clear that a complete fulfilment of its obligations is more than any of us can accomplish. A man who should set out to be absolutely open and sincere in all his dealings would arrive nowhere. However disinterested his attitude might be, however free from self-approbation or censoriousness, however impersonal, he could still not avoid giving constant offence. Few of us have the breadth of view to appreciate an impersonal attitude. One who has it in his power to do another good or ill as he may choose usually demands a certain deference — a certain superior respect for himself as compared with the respect shown for others — without regard to his individual merits. Even those who hold abstractly that 'business is business' are usually not free from this weakness. One who were not to some degree a respecter of persons would find almost no one ready to deal with him. Few persons would buy of him or employ him, and few would serve him as a friend. In short, he would find it hardly possible to exist, much less accomplish any useful purpose in his life. And even if he could control the conditions of existence, it is a question how far the practice of absolute sincerity would be really desirable. No doubt it is for the good of men generally that such should ultimately be established as the universal practice. And certainly it is the duty of each of us to do what we can individually toward bringing about this end. But while aiming immediately at our ulterior end we may fail to take the intermediate steps necessary for its realisation. This is what happens when we attempt to put an absolute standard of honour and truthfulness immediately into practice

without regard to existing conditions. We raise questions that are not immediately pressing, provoke discussions and antagonisms that could be dealt with more profitably later, and in the meantime we diminish our capacities for dealing with the immediate and more imperative aspects of our life problem.

A conscientious man will be guided, then, in his regard for honour, by the extent to which the strictly honourable attitude may be sustained and rendered effective. He will have to consider, among other things, his capacity for endurance and the extent to which the endurance of hardship is on the whole profitable. A man who fails carefully to estimate the sacrifices which truth will demand, and his ability to make them, may commit himself to an attitude of so high a pitch as to bring about a complete moral collapse when it comes to the real test, — than which nothing could be more disastrous either for the cause of truth or in its effect upon the individual character. We tend commonly to assume that a truly virtuous man would sacrifice everything, even life itself, in the cause of truth ; and in view of the more common tendency of men to sacrifice honour to gain, the assumption has a certain legitimate meaning. But surely a man ought not to stake his life and happiness upon any issue that may arise, simply because one side of the question is the side of truth. How far I am called upon to take a stand in a particular case will depend upon how far the matter in question is properly my own affair. In a certain ultimate sense the cause of truth is the affair of every moral agent as such ; but there are specific aspects of it which are more immediately the affair of particular individuals. As a human being I have a certain duty with regard to political and religious liberty in Turkey or in China ; but as an American citizen my more immediate and imperative duties lie nearer home. For that matter, the most imperative of my political duties will lie, generally speaking, immediately in my own city or village. Now a man who is seeking for martyrdom in the cause of truth, as an object in itself, will have no difficulty in attaining his object.



He need only set out, alone and unassisted, to supervise the elections in some of the slum districts of our large cities. But the value of such sacrifice will depend wholly upon the extent of his individual influence, upon the immediate and relative importance of the matter at issue, and upon his relation to it. As leader of an important movement it may be my duty at a crisis, when the question has clearly come to an issue, to support the movement at the risk of my life ; but as an obscure citizen, whose influence is not widespread, or as a citizen of an alien community, and hence not naturally interested, the sacrifice may be a criminal waste of effort.

In all of our efforts in the cause of truth we have to consider the possibility of recognition. That an expression of truth may be effective it must be at least within the range of appreciation of those to whom it is addressed. A man who insists upon a point of view beyond the range of appreciation wastes his efforts, and the result is worse than a mere waste if he simply arouses a blind antagonism. It is of course inevitable that antagonism will be aroused in any effort to introduce more advanced ideas, and it is through antagonism and discussion that new ideas are analysed and their value made clear ; but antagonism may be aroused in such a way as merely to shock the prevailing sentiment and to retard the recognition of the higher ideas. This is not to say, however, that our insistence upon the truth should be adjusted to the greatest range of appreciation ; for we find that, on the contrary, all successful movements begin with the determined attitude of a small minority. Nor is it meant to urge the comfortable argument of the privileged classes that it is a crime to arouse discontent ; for, with men as they are, it is only through discontent that they come to work for better conditions. It means rather that, taking all these facts into consideration, we have to determine the order in which the introduction of higher moral standards may most profitably be attempted. Every higher and broader grasp of truth is based upon the apprehension of

certain truths leading up to it. If you are seeking to overcome ignorance and prejudice, and to lead your fellow-men to broader views and more generous ideals, you must begin with a statement which will at least be intelligible from the point of view at which they now stand. It is a waste of effort to insist upon your highest (though for you the only true) ideal in circles whose ideals are much more elementary. You may, in a measure, embody the higher ideal in your individual practice, and thus indirectly contribute to the elevation of the standard of the community. But there is a limit to which even this is practicable or profitable. There is a point beyond which the difficulties attending even the individual practice of the ideal involve an expenditure of effort which might be better devoted to more immediately imperative problems.

Our common sense, while hesitating to recognise the possibility of making exceptions to the rule of sincerity, tends at the same time to make certain qualifications in favour of those with whom we stand in more intimate relations and of those also who are intrinsically more respectable and trustworthy, judging it to be at any rate more criminal to lie to a virtuous man than to a rascal, to a friend than to a stranger. It seems to me that in this distinction we have at least the outline of a reasonable method for regulating our expression of truth so far as it is involved in our relations to individuals. There can be no doubt that one's intimate associates—wife, parents, friends—have a superior claim upon one not only for truthfulness in the ordinary sense, but for genuine frankness. And this superior claim belongs in a sense to any one who has proved himself to be trustworthy,—not merely in the ordinary sense that he may be trusted with one's pocket-book, but in the higher sense that he may be counted upon to respect one's ideals and one's private aspirations, and to have in general a full appreciation of the responsibility involved in the acceptance of a confidence. In a word, such confidence belongs, by virtue of his character alone, to one who has proved

himself to be, in the true sense, a man of honour and a gentleman.

If all the world were composed of gentlemen, in this sense, there would be no excuse whatever, not alone for overt falsehood, but for the slightest measure of 'reserve' with regard to our inner life. But clearly there are men who do not appreciate the responsibility of a confidence. And there are various degrees of appreciation. Many men, while respecting the rights and the sensibilities of a certain inner circle of family or class relations, have little respect for frankness and generosity as such, and will treat the naïve confidence of a stranger more or less as an opportunity for coarse ridicule, if not for personal advantage ; accordingly, in dealing with those unknown to you it is necessary to be more or less on your guard. There are others who are insensible to the commoner obligations of honour, who will use for their private advantage any information which may be given them, without regard to its confidential character, and some who will seek the bestowal of confidence as an opportunity for gaining such information. Evidently in our dealings with such men (and we cannot avoid dealing with them), it will be a matter of necessity, and also of duty, not only to be on our guard, but at times to practise positive deceit ; and in dealing with the worst of them it will sometimes be necessary to give the lie outright.

We may then summarise our duty in the matter of honour in the conception offered by Kant. According to him, to lie to a man is to treat him as a means rather than an end, — in other words, to treat him as a creature unworthy of human consideration. Now it is evidently our duty to treat every human being with the highest possible consideration. And so a man with a high sense of honour would endeavour to treat every other man with the confidence due to an ideal human character. But there are some men who cannot be dealt with upon this basis. A man of honour, then, while admitting the necessity of making exceptions, would treat it as an unwelcome

necessity ; he would, if possible, strain a point to give all men the honourable treatment due to fully responsible persons, and where they proved to be unworthy, he would at least see that to no want of honour on his part was this unworthiness due.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that in thus outlining the moral attitude toward truth, I may seem to have left open a wide possibility for the evasion of duty. And respect for truth is an element so fundamental to genuine moral fibre that we are justified in regarding all discussion of it with a certain suspicion. But I think it will be found that the standard of honour just outlined is not only not lower than that commonly recognised by upright and honest men but, if anything, higher. We say commonly that a man's word should be as good as his bond. But according to my view it should be much better. A man who does not fear to tell an untruth more than he fears to lose the forfeit which would be required to secure his sincerity is not a very honest man. Nor is he a very honest man to whom a term of imprisonment for perjury is more dreadful than the utterance of a lie under oath in a court of justice. What is here emphasised is that honesty is a matter of degree, extending, let us say, from the perfect mutual transparency of thought and feeling which, under ideal conditions, exists between husband and wife, indefinitely downward past the very commonplace honesty of the grocer who refuses to mix sand with his sugar. And probably a careful self-examination on the part of strictly upright men will only confirm its relative character ; for no intelligent man can deny that there are cases in which he cannot feel himself morally justified in being in the strictest sense truthful. The problem of honour becomes then a problem of determining what degree of honour a man can and ought to maintain, or, in other words, what *attitude* he ought to hold in the matter of honour.

Now when you admit that it is a question of attitude, and

<sup>1</sup> See Martineau's treatment of veracity, *Types of Ethical Theory*, Part II, Book I, ch. vi., § 12.

that the possibilities of realising the ideal of honour will depend upon the existing conditions, you have certainly created an opportunity for one who is not strictly conscientious to make a large allowance for the difficulty of his conditions. But I do not believe it possible to frame a definition of the moral attitude of which this should not be true. We have here the same margin of uncertainty that was noted in connection with the social aspect of duty. You can state the general principle in a more or less definite manner, but its final application to an individual case is a matter of moral appreciation rather than of scientific statement. But for one who is really in earnest the higher and lower attitudes toward a particular situation may generally be distinguished, however difficult they may be to define. Admitting that we must make certain concessions to prejudice and ignorance, the concession made in the ultimate interest of the truth itself will differ widely from that made on behalf of selfish enjoyment. Nor will it be altogether impossible to apply our conception of the moral attitude to the conduct of others. We condemn certain sacrifices as wasteful and immoral, but we know that a genuine devotion to truth and honour will still as a rule necessitate a certain sacrifice both of material interests and of social sympathy. There are perhaps unreflective yet well-intentioned men who do not appreciate any considerable divergence between their duty and their immediate interests. But when we find a man of superior education, and presumably of a higher development of intelligence and moral insight, whose political and religious views are invariably such as to win the approbation of his fellows and to promote his private interests, we are justified in the conclusion that his regard for truth is at least suspicious.

(b) *Self-control*

Inasmuch as the element of self-control has been largely emphasised in our account of the moral life, it will be well, in con-

clusion, to make a brief summary of the moral attitude from this standpoint. Self-control, like each of the other virtues, becomes, when carefully defined, simply a special standpoint for the definition of morality as a whole ; and the standpoint of self-control is perhaps the most personal of all moral standpoints. Now it is evident that, on the one hand, the possibilities of self-control will depend upon a careful consideration of the conditions surrounding my action ; for example, I cannot expect to maintain an evenness of temper and an attitude of justice and reasonableness toward others if I am doing constant injury to my nerves and my digestion by over-indulgence in food and drink. But, on the other hand, it is evident that the possibility of self-control will depend upon the rigour of the personal ideal which I endeavour to realise, — in other words, upon the extent of moral responsibility which I assume. And it is clear that I am not capable of fulfilling an unlimited measure of responsibility. The situation is the same from a moral standpoint as when it is viewed from the narrower standpoint of accomplishing a maximum amount of work. I have certain capacities for bodily labour, nervous strain and moral courage ; and the problem before me is to realise these capacities to their utmost in the form of sustained moral growth. It is well perhaps that these capacities should not be too narrowly estimated, for upon trial they frequently prove to be broader than anticipated. We often find that the more responsibility we undertake, the more our courage rises to meet it. Nevertheless it is folly to assume that our capacity for endurance has no limits. If we ignore its limits and undertake a task too great for us, there is danger of moral prostration ; and the reaction from a courage too highly pitched and too lightly calculated may be a permanent condition of moral helplessness and cowardice. The responsibility assumed must thus be carefully regulated. Between a too narrow and ignoble estimate of our moral capacity and a too highly strung effort to transcend our capacity, there is a certain constant adjustment of responsibility



and capacity most favourable for a maximum of sustained growth. The man who arrives at this adjustment most nearly and maintains it most constantly, is he who best fulfils the demands of a genuine moral life.



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